

THE ARCHITECTURAL THEORY OF WILLIAM RICHARD LETHABY

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William Richard Lethaby was, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a very well-known English architect, educator in the fields of architecture and design and historian of both architecture and art. His interests and abilities ranged over a surprisingly large array of subjects and his influence in a number of areas was considerable. While previous studies of Lethaby have offered valuable information and insights focusing on his biography, on discussion of his architectural work and/or an overall appreciation of his accomplishments, it was thought worthwhile to make a more expanded study of Lethaby's thinking in order to see more clearly the main characteristics and how his different areas of interest tie together.

After some study of Lethaby's writings, what were perceived to be the principal areas into which his theory of architecture might most productively be grouped were selected for discussion. The resulting topics include Lethaby's views on past architecture, those on "style" and ornament in architecture, the relationship of architecture to the other arts, to engineering and science, how to deal with architectural artifacts, his thoughts about towns and cities, whether architecture could have a national essence, and more. Lethaby did not produce a formal theoretical tract so it was necessary to draw his theory out empirically looking at his writing and work in the various subject areas. Besides his writings in periodicals and books, an attempt was made, in the interest of a more enhanced view, to also review Lethaby's correspondence (where possible) with others, his subjects and notations in his sketchbooks, and to study his architectural and other design work to see how this related to his thinking. Lethaby was known for his aphorisms which capture his thinking in a very succinct and memorable way. More extensive passages in his writing are also compelling and inimitable and it was thought that the inclusion of a good number of Lethaby's own words in this study could bring an even closer understanding. An attempt was made to point out, where it occurred, when Lethaby's thinking changed over time or did not.

The main results of this study center around two main points. The most important concerns documenting and further exploring the extensive interconnectedness of his thinking on one subject with

another. Lethaby was interested in this – for example, in questions of how knowledge of the past could be relevant to the present and future, how the artisan, builder, architect and engineer were to relate, and the extension of the quintessential Arts and Crafts dedication to total design from knives and forks to door hinges to room décor and a building's style and ornament. Lethaby was notable in expanding this integrative view to the larger scale of towns and cities as well. The second point involves a more developed discussion of the evolution of Lethaby's thinking regarding the role of the machine in the production of the built environment and more as to how he, as a leading spokesman in England of Arts and Crafts philosophy, could come to an accommodation, with certain qualifications, with mass production. The study also discusses more thoroughly how Lethaby's interest in integration produced a new kind of education in architecture and design – a type which led to important results abroad with the Deutscher Werkbund and Bauhaus. An Appendix reviews how the English Arts and Crafts point of view, with Lethaby as one of its more important spokesman, is related to later architectural developments abroad.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Howard John Iber was born in Peoria, Illinois and graduated from Bellaire High School in Bellaire, Texas. He holds Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Science degrees from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. During the course of his Ph.D. work at Cornell University he was the recipient, in 1974, of the Eidlitz Travelling Fellowship.

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June, 1983

To My Father

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In the following paragraphs I gratefully acknowledge the help of the named institutions and certain people, some of whom are no longer with us. I apologize for not always including, in thanking people, their proper academic, professional and other titles and ranks, as they existed at the time of my contact with them on the matter of this dissertation or as they may now possess. This is especially true in mentioning those overseas.

In the United Kingdom, I would like to thank Messrs. Nicholas Cooper, Godfrey Rubens, and Andrew Saint for sharing information about Lethaby with me and, for the same reason, especially Messrs. David Martin and John Brandon-Jones. In regard to help received at various institutions I want to thank particularly the staff of the Royal Institute of British Architects in London—both at the RIBA Library and at the Drawings Collection. My thanks to others in London include the staff of the British Museum

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch of Author	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Preface	ix
Introduction	xii
Chapter I. Comments about Lethaby's Life in General and about his Career	1
Chapter II. Criticism of the Present and an Explanation of the Past	42
Chapter III. Definitions	125
Chapter IV. The Aims of Architectural Design	143
Chapter V. Function and Functionalism	165
Chapter VI. Meaning and Value in Architecture	187
Chapter VII. Lethaby and Architectural "Styles"	232
Chapter VIII. Ornament	270
Chapter IX. Building Materials	309
Chapter X. Machines, Engineering and Science	356
Chapter XI. Problems of Enlarged Architectural Scope—Towns and Environment	404
Chapter XII. The Problem of the Past—Architectural Preservation	447
Chapter XIII. Lethaby and Architectural Education	508
Chapter XIV. Nationalist and Internationalist	551
Chapter XV. The Modern Way: How Architecture Should Be, Now and in the Future	606
Chapter XVI. Conclusions	648
Appendix A: The Influence of Lethaby and the Arts and Crafts Movement	673
Appendix B: Lethaby's Work in the Visual Arts	791
Bibliography—Part A: Selected Writings and Expressed Thoughts by Lethaby	805
Bibliography—Part B: General Bibliography (excluding Lethaby's writings)	817

PREFACE

The roots of this study can be found in my participation (beginning in September, 1971) in a graduate seminar on the Arts and Crafts Movement taught by Professor Robert J. Clark under the auspices of the Department of Art and Archeology at Princeton University. The seminar which, the next year, yielded several contributions (including my own) to the publication The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1876-1916 (Robert J. Clark, ed.) and further provided the catalyst for my specific interest in late nineteenth century- early twentieth century British architecture. The following year, at Cornell University, I pursued this interest further by making particularized studies of selected British architects from the period mentioned. One of those studied was William Richard Lethaby.

Through reading what had been written about Lethaby and more importantly, what he had written himself, I came to appreciate him. I also came to believe that he was worthy of further study, especially in regard to his architectural theory, which really is the prime source of his importance. What would be most useful, I decided, what, in fact, had not been done previously, was to study Lethaby's theory comprehensively. I began to do this in the winter of 1973-74 and this work is the result.

In connection with this undertaking, in addition to studying relevant published writings by Lethaby and becoming familiar with publications (and unpublished studies) by others which related to my task, trips to the sites of Lethaby's extant architectural works were made. Also, documents kept at the Athenaeum in Barnstaple (Lethaby's birthplace and hometown) and at the Royal Institute of British Architects—the two primary repositories of such materials connected to Lethaby's career as an architect, educator, etc. as are still extant—have been examined, including sketchbooks and correspondence. Other pieces of Lethaby's correspondence, such as those located at the British Museum and those in the possession of Mr. John Brandon-Jones have also been studied as have Lethaby's drawings kept at the Victoria and Albert Museum and in the RIBA Drawings Collection, including those he produced, where available, as an employee of Richard Norman Shaw. Also a number of photo repositories in Britain

containing graphic information relating to Lethaby were visited and a number of personal interviews conducted.

A few observations on the evidence of continued interest in Lethaby since his death, in addition to the study, seem worth noting here. One is that interest in and regard for Lethaby did not quickly abate in the later, post-mortem years of the decade in which he died (the 1930s). In addition to the numerous obituaries and some retrospective exhibitions showing Lethaby's work, there were, in the 1930s several reprintings of his literary efforts as well as other indications of the continuing esteem in which he was held. The decade that followed appears to have been something of a hiatus in terms of posthumous interest in Lethaby—at least in regard to the most noticeable indicators of interest. What component of this situation is owed to a preoccupation with and the limitations imposed by the Second World War and to the ascendancy of an architectural point of view which was out of harmony with Lethaby's is difficult to say. Interest in Lethaby becomes more noticeable again in the late 1940s and builds to a high point in the year of Lethaby's centenary in the next decade (1957). It can be noticed that the middle years of the 1950's yielded a number of important articles and lectures on Lethaby and also a symposium, a university thesis, and the reprinting of three of his major works.

After a short interval following Lethaby's centenary year, there is evidence, beginning in 1960 of renewed interest in him, but not so much, judging by publications and other mass communications, as in the decade before. Also, there is then a change in the character of the interest in Lethaby. A greater number of studies involving Lethaby focus more on how he related to other architectural figures in a larger picture. The work of Reyner Banham and Julius Posener, for example, show this. This way of treating Lethaby continued to be the case in the 1970s, although important studies were also made (or begun) then which focused on Lethaby (including three doctoral dissertations) and there was the reprinting, after a two decade intermission (which seems to be the usual interval, more or less, in the reissuing of his writings) of one of Lethaby's more important works. All of this occurred in sufficient enough volume to indicate an interest in Lethaby greater than in the previous decade and comparable to that to be noted in the 1950s. This level of interest continued in the 1980s, beginning with the first book

length study (Peter Davey's) specifically concentrating on the architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and giving over a major section to discussing Lethaby.

INTRODUCTION

1.

William Lethaby was a man of many interests. Those relating to architecture are the most important of these, as a group, because the contributions that he was able to make to architecture, through the happy combination of his sundry abilities, some good luck, and the will to do so, provide, in aggregate, the most important basis for remembering him. Practically all of Lethaby's contributions associated with architecture are either the direct result of his activities as a theorist or the indirect consequence of these through the embodiment of his theory in practice. This should not suggest, however, that Lethaby provided any sort of formal theoretical tract, all-encompassing or otherwise, for he was quite adverse to such things. Rather, his theory was conveyed in a less methodical way through his writings, his spoken word and his deeds. These all had their effect in a variety of contexts.

It is commonly held that Lethaby was an important British architectural thinker. Considering this, a study of his architectural theory which would treat with adequate thoroughness all important areas of this, attempt to discover what connections might exist between these areas and then try to see what kind of total picture might emerge, would seem to be both desirable and appropriate. However, despite the appearance of a number of valuable discussions on some of the major (and some minor) aspects of Lethaby's theory and the identification and explanation of some of his contributions to architecture related to these, no overall treatment of his theory, of the scope which seems to be called for, has appeared.¹ This study is intended to substantially improve this circumstance.

The chapters in this study address those topics whose discussion it was thought could most fully illuminate Lethaby's theory. The best method for realizing an overall exposition and analysis of Lethaby's thinking, it was decided, could not involve the examination and interpretation of monadic, homogenous components of theory, but rather, the examination of a selected set of topics which are

¹ See the bibliographical note at the end of this Introduction.

variously interpenetrating and more diversified in nature. Some brief comments on the selected parts of this study follow.

The first chapter has two emphases: first, the context in which Lethaby's theory of architecture developed—early influences, education, professional training, travels, involvement in organizations, other relevant interest—and second, the means by which his theory was disseminated. In the second chapter the goals are to characterize Lethaby's general outlook, predominantly a negative one, concerning architectural activity in his day and, insofar as it might bear on the foregoing, to discuss his views on past architecture.² The treatment of Lethaby's views on the latter subject in this second chapter (and in some additional commentary in later ones) is not intended as a full analysis of Lethaby as a historian; for this, a task deserving further attention, lies outside the bounds of this study. The inclusion in the study of some discussion on this subject is thought appropriate since some views relating to history could be considered part of or closely connected to "theory." In Lethaby's case, particularly, inclusion of such discussion is necessary since his views on the past can be found to impact noticeably on his views on questions important in his own time.

Later chapters in this study, with the exception of the last, each address specialized topics of smaller or greater purview relating to Lethaby's theory. This begins (Chapter III) with a discussion of the meaning for Lethaby of fundamental terms like "architect" and "design" and an examination of some of the issues (others are raised in later chapters) attaching to these. In each of the Chapters III through XV the main discussion includes attention to Lethaby's critical (or negative) views and his prescriptive (or positive) ones although there is included in each chapter some supporting material such as that concerning Lethaby's related design activities.³

² Some of his thoughts pertaining to allied pursuits such as engineering and art are also addressed in this chapter where this is thought to be of some use in advancing the aims of the study.

³ These chapters are quite interconnected. A component of Lethaby's theory that is a major topic of discussion in one chapter is often an important sub-part in another. Thus, for example, Lethaby's views on preservation are also part of his views on urban questions, those on ornament also part of those on styles. However (to continue with the same examples) Lethaby's view on ornament and on preservation involve much more than the role these play as sub-parts of Lethaby's views on, respectively, style and urban matters and the discussion reflects this.

Following the presentation in the final chapter (the conclusions drawn from the earlier ones) are two appendices. The first is a discussion of the architectural impact of the English Arts and Crafts Movement at home and abroad and of its relationship to other contemporary and later architectural activity. A principal aim of the appendix is to suggest, as a function of his key role in the Arts and Crafts Movement, the considerable impact of Lethaby. The second appendix provides a chronologically arranged list, with some additional information, of Lethaby's own work in the visual arts—concentrating mainly on architecture but including his work in other disciplines as well. Following the Appendices is supplied Part A of the Bibliography (a list of Lethaby's written works and selected talks) and finally, a selected General Bibliography (Part B) of consulted works by others.

The last segment of the study proper (that is, Chapter XVI) offers general observations about Lethaby's theory and discusses his various contributions to architecture (both those noted earlier by others and those identified as a consequence of this study), all of which depend, ultimately, on his theory.⁴ The discussion of Lethaby's contributions concentrates, in line with the bounds of this study, on those relating to architecture—both those which follow most directly from his theory and those which derive from it more indirectly as, for example, those obtaining from his design work. Contributions not specifically architectural but which have an architectural aspect also form part of the discussion but there is no attempt to mention those not connected or only remotely connected to architecture.

2.

After a comprehensive look at Lethaby's theory of architecture, one can see with certainty that his contributions to architecture, accomplished through the written and spoken expressions of his theory and through his practice, were both numerous and diverse. These contributions are briefly described in the following passages in this part of the introduction.

⁴ The discussions in each of the previous chapters (and even the material in the textual Appendix) give support to not just one but rather a number of points made in the final chapter. These points, for the most part, derive support from a number of sectors in Lethaby's thought.

One major contribution comes about through Lethaby's role as the most important spokesman, in the second half of its main period of vitality, for the Arts and Crafts point of view. This was a role for Lethaby which had its beginnings in the 1880's, which developed more fully in the next decade (the loss of William Morris' leadership being a factor then) and ended only with his death in 1931, years after the viability of the Arts and Crafts Movement as a whole had, in fact, ceased. In his capacity as an Arts and Crafts spokesman, Lethaby focused on a number of concerns which reflect the influence of three guiding lights of the Movement—Ruskin, Morris and Webb.⁵ Considering that side of him which functioned as an orthodox promulgator of the views of these men, one can say that Lethaby's contribution lies in the application of his considerable intellect to provide a most eloquent articulation of their views and in adding the weight of his own endorsement, of consequence because of his own high reputation, in so doing.

Lethaby, however, did make several important changes in thinking concerning ideas inherited from Ruskin (and from Morris and Webb in their capacity as earlier disciples of Ruskin). Two of these concern Ruskin's antipathy towards the machine, an important part of the latter's theory but a part that contributed increasingly to the perception of his views as antiquated. Lethaby's changes, made in recognition of the difficulty of this part of Ruskin's theory, were first, in response to Ruskin's objection to machine-made ornament (an objection Lethaby shared) to suggest that architecture could do without ornament altogether and second, in a more radical departure, to actually accept the machine in some contexts. More will be said a bit further on about Lethaby's attitudes about ornament and about the machine, in the context of discussing his other contributions, but here it would be good to note that the second change created a problem, never resolved really, in his own theory. Briefly, the problem was that acceptance of the machine meant acceptance of the type of human labor which stood in accompaniment with machine usage and that Lethaby was on record as condemning this as inferior to hand-crafted work. The problem is

⁵ The other major influences on Lethaby were, besides his parents (his father's vocation exposed him early on to the activities and viewpoint of the craftsman): Alexander Lauder in Barnstaple, who functioned as a model for the architect/craftsman/teacher/political activist that Lethaby later became and Norman Shaw in London, who greatly furthered Lethaby's growth in architectural matters—especially that relating to actual practice.

noticeable in Lethaby's later years when he can be counted as one who acknowledged that the use of the machine was an important and valid path to be pursued though he continued to speak also as a partisan of handicraft work. One other important change is one which could be characterized, perhaps, as an enlargement in the applicability of (but not the scope of) Ruskin's thought. Lethaby worked more effectively than Morris, Webb or Ruskin himself) to bring about a more universal application of the views they shared.

Another important contribution of Lethaby involves his activity as a critic of contemporary architecture. In this capacity he concentrated, to some degree, on concerns which were also those of Ruskin, Morris and Webb. These included those about architects working in "styles" and the signs of decay in the culture generally that this indicated—about the cheerless situation of the contemporary craftsman (and workers generally), the usage of machines which was a major factor in this, and finally, concerns about the environment and preservation. Lethaby in his criticism also expanded on themes taken from others. For example, buildings in the contemporary architectural idioms which were evolving on the Continent (the de Stijl Movement in the Netherlands, for one) were as much the basis for complaint, to Lethaby's mind, as recent work in the "historical" styles. Lethaby developed his own special areas of criticism as well, architectural education being one.⁶

Some elements of Lethaby's criticism of architectural education in his time, those related to his assertion that present training was not practical, are part of a larger body of functionalist-oriented complaints among which are also his various concerns about the inadequate quality of construction in his time. Most of Lethaby's criticism, whether based purely on earlier thinking, on his own permutations of that, or on that of his own invention were appropriately levied and served a useful purpose, one is tempted to believe. Some points stressed by Lethaby were also made by others in the same years but few

⁶ Lethaby claimed, for example, that a consensus about what constituted adequate architectural training was lacking. Also, formal architectural education was presently, he said, too remote from reality and too elitist in tone. Inappropriate and incorrect emphasis was given, he said as well, to "originality" and to the notion of the designer as an autonomous being. Also, in the schools the wrong lessons were being learned from architectural history. In addition, there was also in the schools, he complained, a completely insupportable reliance on "theory" and on universal systems of proportions. This last complaint he also leveled at practitioners.

approached the incisiveness and wit found in Lethaby's commentary. This also was an important aspect of his contribution as a critic.

Among Lethaby's contributions in the realm of providing positive solutions to correcting the problems he had identified in modern architecture was the part he played as an important proponent of functionalism in Britain. His contribution in this regard relies on the following five factors: One, Lethaby gave functionalist concerns much prominence in his writings. Two, in his development of functionalist themes which brought about this prominence the most important feature is an adherence to a functionalism which included much more than merely utilitarian concerns.⁷ Three, Lethaby gained access to some important *fora* useful in the dissemination of his thoughts on functionalism. Four, he was articulate at expressing his ideas. Five, his potent advocacy of an enriched type of functionalism was timely.

This last factor is important not only in the context of the continued struggle waged by the "progressives" in England in Lethaby's time to free architecture from what was thought to be the irrelevancies of building in the historical styles but also in the larger, international one pertaining to succeeding developments in the story of twentieth century functionalism—especially those taking place on the Continent. In particular, Lethaby's functionalist-related ideas (and those of the English Arts and Crafts generally) exercised an important influence on later German developments through the architect Muthesius and by other means. Lethaby's thought is also clearly contributory through a number of channels to later functionalist-related practices in other countries on the Continent. All of this involves, most directly, a chain of contacts that reaches from Lethaby to Muthesius to Behrens and from him to Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier; but connected to later Continental activity as well is Lethaby's more general contribution through the intellectual leadership he exercised in the English Arts and Crafts Movement.

⁷ Lethaby did, however, assign utility much importance—calling it at least once the "basis" of architecture.

Lethaby's ideas about functionalism in architecture, functionalism considered in its most purely utilitarian mode, have roots in earlier thinking. This is true, as well, of Lethaby's enlarged conception of function (that is, including considerations which lie beyond "utility") although Lethaby's own thorough development of this enlarged view is a distinctive aspect of his theory. Related to this is another key idea of Lethaby's, also involving functionalism—his belief that aesthetic value in architecture cannot exist independently of the satisfaction of functional needs.

The determined dedication to fostering a more rational approach to architecture generally can be cited as another broader contribution of Lethaby's, one which subsumes that having to do with functionalism. In connection with this broader contribution note should be made of Lethaby's insistence on an empirical approach to the practice of architecture—one which calls for the pursuit of experiment in methods of construction and in the use of materials (the newly-developed as well as the traditional ones). Engineering and scientific knowledge should be utilized, Lethaby believed, and the methods of these disciplines emulated in architecture, as is shown by his enthusiasm for developing a morphology of architectural components like door-types and chimneys. Also, although his expression of it is pre-dated by that of some foreign architects (Le Corbusier, to name a prominent example) Lethaby's interest in standardization is important, at least within the context of the development of English architectural theory.

Engineers and scientist, however, were not to be thought of as faultless paragons and another part of Lethaby's contribution concerns his efforts to encourage people in these disciplines to try to become more sensitive to the larger impact of their work. In the recent past Lethaby maintained, citing, for example, various conditions accompanying the building of the railroads, that the activities of engineers and scientists had had some decidedly insalubrious effects on the overall living environment.

Lethaby's rational approach (and one should remind that the word "rational" cannot be used to totally characterize his architectural outlook) also helps to explain two more of his contributions—the influence he exercised in conjunction with his (eventual) acceptance of the role of the machine in architecture and the arguments he made on behalf of exercising restraint in or even abstaining from

architectural ornamentation. In regard to the first of these one should note, to begin with, that Lethaby's contribution lies not in being the first to accept the machine for use in architectural endeavor, for other prominent architectural theorists of his time had already done that. This included Frank Lloyd Wright whose perspective was also heavily indebted to the values of the arts and crafts. Rather, for Lethaby, it was in trying, having rejected the view of at least one of his principal mentors in this, to change the opinion about machines commonly held by the most progressive body of architects, artists and craftsmen in England in his time, those associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement. Lethaby did have some success in altering the predominantly anti-machine outlook of those just mentioned—an outlook based, as his own had been, on Ruskin's thinking. Interestingly, Lethaby's various analogies connecting buildings with transportation devices and other machinery that he admired antedate by a number of years the more well-known ones of Le Corbusier.

The larger significance of Lethaby's accomplishment in regard to changing the point of view of his Arts and Crafts associates, considering the Arts and Crafts as a major phase in the development of modern architecture, was that he was working on what might be called the Movement's "blind" side. The effect of his efforts, insofar as these were successful, was to give English modernism a fuller dimension by adding to what existed a technical component which had appeared on the Continent (co-developed with other ingredients inspired, in part, by the English Arts and Crafts and made possible by the machine).

The aforesaid service of Lethaby also involves another of his contributions—that associated with his role as a founder of Britain's Design and Industries Association. This association, founded in 1915, was inspired by the Werkbund organizations which had come into being earlier on the Continent and especially by the highly successful Deutscher Werkbund which, in turn, had been influenced strongly by earlier English arts and crafts activity. The appearance in Britain of the D.I.A. as this association was called was an important new signal that there was a desire to achieve, and it was thought possible to achieve in Britain, high-quality design, perhaps even a kind of art, in industrially-made objects. Lethaby's involvement with the D.I.A. shows also the change that had occurred in his own attitude towards the machine. Lethaby played an important role, in connection with D.I.A. activities and even before, in

calling attention in England to the successes (with important ramifications for architecture) that Germany had been realizing in the industrial arts. Also of importance, Lethaby identified other progressive signs from the Continent, from Germany and elsewhere—especially those relating to civil engineering, urbanism, and attitudes about civic pride and national identity. Lethaby urged that Britain attempt to emulate the foreign successes he had perceived; it was a matter, he thought, of trying to catch up.

In commenting on what might be called Lethaby's reductive tendencies in architectural expression (these are also linked to his rationalist proclivities) one might first observe that among the things that the English Movement in general distinctly contributed to the further development of the Modern was the inclination to simplify architectural form and to reduce or eliminate ornament even in those contexts where it traditionally had been considered appropriate and desirable to have it. Lethaby certainly bears great responsibility, through the effects of his theory at least, for such a contribution by the English Movement.

Focusing on the subject of ornament in particular, one can note that Lethaby's views are similar to those of certain foreign architectural contemporaries like Loos and Sullivan. Like Sullivan, Lethaby suggested that ornament might be eliminated temporarily. He also stated on occasion, perhaps closer to Loos, that it was not essential to architecture. Mostly, however, Lethaby seemed to believe that ornament, if not essential to architecture, was nevertheless an important part of it. If it had to be eliminated for a while this was only part of the process of obtaining an acceptable replacement for the kind of ornament which predominated in his day. A new type of ornament, more relevant to its own time and place, should be allowed to emerge, Lethaby believed and he attempted, in his own brief practice, to try to define such a new type. Based on an observation of what Lethaby said about contemporary approaches to architectural ornament (criticisms and suggestions for improvement) and what he did in his own practice, a new ornament would be one (in this he was on common ground with others in the Arts and Crafts Movement) entailing more restraint than the old. The production of ornament in various historicizing modes, something Lethaby (and Sullivan too, for example) found useless and irrelevant, the utilization of one

material in a way which imitated another and the use of machines to imitate hand-work all were to be rejected.

Lethaby's attempts to improve architectural education and education in the arts generally constitute another area of contribution. In 1896, he began his job as chief administrator (the first) of the London Central School of Arts and Crafts which, starting not long after its inception and continuing for a number of years thereafter, was regarded as the most progressive art school not only in Britain but in all of Europe. In Germany, especially, efforts to imitate the London school led, to name an important series of interactions there in matters relating to art and architectural education, from Lethaby to Muthesius to Poelzig and Behrens and, eventually to the Bauhaus.

Under Lethaby's leadership at the London Central School, and guided by his priorities, an effective fusion of arts and crafts training was accomplished. Training in common and learning by doing were two hallmarks of a process which produced reverberations in later schools far from London. Part of the success of the London school was also due to Lethaby's abilities as a talent scout; he displayed a remarkable gift for recruiting outstanding faculty members for the school, some of them completely unrecognized beforehand, as in the case of one who became, partially through some timely encouragement by Lethaby, one of the most eminent Western calligraphers of modern times—Edward Johnston. Lethaby was able to recruit an outstanding architectural friend from his Arts and Crafts circle, Halsey Ricardo, to teach architecture at the school and two more talented Arts and Crafts associates, George Jack (Philip Webb's principal assistant) and Henry Wilson, to teach, respectively, furniture making and metalwork. Besides being an outstanding administrator of the London Central School, Lethaby excelled there himself, as many have attested, as a teacher.

Lethaby also distinguished himself as a teacher at London's Royal College of Art where he held the position (beginning in 1900) as the school's first Professor of Design. As in the case of the London Central School, Lethaby was responsible for important educational reform and is credited with some important recruiting there also—for instance, persuading his friend, fellow arts and crafts architect Beresford Pite, to be the College's Professor of Architecture.

Another aspect of Lethaby's contribution to architecture through education had to do with the fact that some of the architectural students at Lethaby's London Central School went on to form a key part of the staff, in the early years of the twentieth century, of the newly formed London City Council Architects Department. Important public buildings in the London area were undertaken by the Department and thus, by the implementation in actual construction of the ideas and values to which many of the Department's members were exposed under Lethaby's leadership, the urban complexion of London was noticeably changed in ways sympathetic to his thought. Lethaby himself had a more direct part to play in the appearance of one of the Architect's Department's more significant buildings by virtue of his important role (c. 1905-1908) in determining the requirements for and shaping the design (acting, in a way, as client) of the London Central School's new premises on Southampton Row.

One further activity of Lethaby's in the realm of architectural education should be noted—the key part he played in an attempt around 1906 to reform the Royal Institute of British Architects' education program. Lethaby was the intellectual leader on the Institute's committee which drafted a new syllabus intended to improve the architectural education program. A number of new features can be found in the syllabus, features which can be associated with Lethaby's earlier efforts in the education field.⁸

Lethaby also made important contributions relating to urbanism and to preservation. One interesting thing in regard to the first mentioned is the extent to which Lethaby, as an architect, was concerned with the subject. He devoted a significant amount of attention to criticizing contemporary urban conditions in England and making suggestions for improvement. This was not commonplace for English architects of the time but quite natural for Lethaby, given his inclination to branch out from his architectural base-discipline into a variety of related interests.

⁸ Such features, in addition to those already mentioned, included teaching students to think of architectural practice as “service” to society, emphasizing engineering and science in the curriculum, and presenting architectural history as the history of solving problems rather than as the discussion of artifacts. The syllabus recommended that student work should include doing studies of past English architecture and that students should be encouraged to travel abroad. Not many of the reforms developed by the committee were soon put into effect, however.

In his criticisms about urban conditions, Lethaby seems to have been more concerned with physical appearance and especially appearance as indicative of hygienic status and agreeableness to habitation than with, say, how a city or town functioned economically. His suggestions for urban improvement indicate an incremental, evolutionary approach (following Ruskin)—starting with the most mundane, custodial operations—rather than the swift and sweeping kind. Interestingly, in Lethaby's commentary, arguments were built around such concepts as depicting cities as cradles of civilization—places where society was nurtured—and his maintenance that architects should respond to a variety of loyalties, to city and country as well as to the individual clients from whom commissions were obtained.

Among other interesting features of Lethaby's perspective on urban questions were his proposals for allowing new public buildings and even new towns to function partially as war memorials, and his perceptive comments about the importance of neighborhoods in urban life. Also, his advocacy in 1896 of green belts to serve London is interesting in the context of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City proposal two years later and other developments in English town planning. Lethaby, it might also be noted, offered in 1903 in collaboration with Halsey Ricardo, one of the three proposals made in the competition to design the first Garden City, Letchworth, and seven years earlier made an interesting proposal (like the 1903 plan, not realized) for the redesign of a central area of London—a design which featured an important new thoroughfare extending from the British Museum to the Bank of Thames.

At least as significant as Lethaby's activities related to questions about urbanism and certainly of more identifiable impact were those in a field which overlaps this—preservation. Preservation was of great interest to Lethaby and because of his important efforts in its service, he must be placed high in any ranking of outstanding preservationists. An important foundation of his preservation activity was his involvement in the redoubtable Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), the eminent English preservation organization which expended its energies in its early years as much in efforts to protect old buildings from “restoration” as from damage wrought by time and the elements. Through the Society Lethaby first came into contact with Morris, who was the group's founder and with Webb, who was another of its early leaders. As Morris and Webb aged, the organization's leadership fell to Lethaby.

Thus, Lethaby's importance in this connection increased not only with respect to the Society's dedicated efforts in matters relating to the group's official activities, but also in connection with the small and informal, but influential school of architecture which, for the younger members, the Society's meetings had come to be. Following in the footsteps of Webb, Lethaby functioned as the guiding intellect in the wide-ranging discussions (well beyond that pertaining specifically to building protection and preservation) which took place at the group's gatherings.

The methods developed by the SPAB were radically different from those of contemporary "restoring" architects like George Gilbert Scott and J. L. Pearson. Instead of doing away with large portions of old building fabric in the name of achieving a cosmetically homogenous whole, careful repair with a minimum of tampering with existing work was advocated. In providing in-fill where it was needed there was to be no attempt to imitate old work. Lethaby's service to preservation was not only to facilitate the implementation of such methods as a leader in the SPAB's sundry activities but also to apply them in his own work, for example, carried out while serving (from 1906) in the prestigious post of Surveyor to one of England's most notable buildings, Westminster Abbey, and, later, in a second important position of like kind, as Surveyor to the cathedral at Rochester. These positions afforded the opportunity to demonstrate in connection with structures of high public visibility the advantages of using methods of dealing with old buildings which at least in the Abbey's case, were markedly different from those usually adopted by his recent predecessors.

Lethaby's contribution to preservation was made also in ways other than those associated with his SPAB activities and his positions as Surveyor to important English church structures. In his various talks and writings, commentary about preservation appears frequently, whether or not this was the featured topic. Lethaby delivered searing criticisms of the practice of "restoration" (applied both to past acts and those of the moment) in both England and abroad. But his attitude towards preservation problems, on the whole, was a more positive one than that of his mentors, at least that of Ruskin and Morris. He effectively proselytized his views on preservation methodology but, in addition, offered in his commentary about preservation a number of other ideas interesting for the time when they appeared. One of these was that

preservation could play a role in stabilizing an area or neighborhood in a city; another that one should consider different levels of importance in preservation—i.e., that there existed not only historical structures of national and international importance but also ones without such wide significance which were, nevertheless, very important in a smaller context. Lethaby's enlarged view of what constituted legitimate and important preservation activity is also worth noting. This view is suggested in the last mentioned idea and also in his interest in preserving vernacular works, in preserving the context of old buildings along with the building themselves (this extended to landscape preservation without buildings, as well) and in the preservation of the methods by which old work was done.

Lethaby is of significance also for his contributions as an architectural designer and as a delineator. The first of the two major contexts in which these contributions were realized was Lethaby's service as chief lieutenant to one of the period's most successful and influential architectural practitioners in England, Norman Shaw. Shaw's willingness to allow Lethaby an unusual degree of design freedom in the projects to which he was assigned allowed Lethaby's personal imprint to be displayed in a number of instances. Lethaby also showed himself, in the drawings which he prepared for Shaw and earlier in those for Alexander Lauder, to be one of the outstanding architectural illustrators of the time.

The second (later) major context, where the connection to Lethaby's theory is probably more direct, is provided by Lethaby's own practice. Although he built only a half-dozen new buildings on his own, he was able in these to give physical dimension to many of his ideas. Each of his principal buildings—a church, a commercial building, and four residential projects is an outstanding expression of the Arts and Crafts idiom as interpreted by Lethaby.⁹ Evidence is easily found in these buildings of such attributes of his thought as the concern for fine craftsmanship, sound construction, rational planning, simplification of form, reduction of ornament and the production of a building which would respond, in terms of materials and form, to its context. Lethaby also put into practice in the building of these works his belief in

⁹ In his work as a professional architect he was also responsible for some other work of considerable merit. This included some remodeling work, and at least one addition. Lethaby's architectural work also included some supervision in completing work begun by others.

collaborative effort (the close working together of, for example, architects, artists, craftsmen) and his conviction as to the necessity for the designer to be close to the constructive process. Lethaby's commitment to experimentation is likewise shown in his work, as in his innovative use of concrete at Brockhampton and, probably, in the design (unrealized) that he helped draw up for the Liverpool Cathedral competition. Also, Lethaby's interest in reviving the use of calligraphy in architecture should be mentioned. He is credited with being a modern-day pioneer in this, his Eagle Insurance building being an example.

One additional, theoretical interest of Lethaby, his interest in symbolism, should be noted in regard to his contributions made through practice. In reference to this it should be recalled that Lethaby believed that all historicizing architectural ornament should be rejected and that, preferably, this should be replaced (instead of having none at all, which he also defended sometimes) with a type he considered more valid. In his built work Lethaby took steps to demonstrate what the nature of this kind of ornament might be.

One key requisite Lethaby had for ornament, as related to symbolism, was that it should have meaning—significance. One can observe in Lethaby's work an unusual (considering the milieu) and personal approach in the use of symbolism as one method of satisfying this requirement. This approach is evident in Lethaby's All Saints Church at Brockhampton and in the Eagle Insurance Building in Birmingham.¹⁰ Lethaby's interest in symbolism can also be observed, amongst other places, in the design submitted for the Liverpool Cathedral competition, in that of Smith and Brewer's Mary Ward Settlement House, London, in which Lethaby also did some detailing, and in the design of a building in which he acted more as client than designer—the new facilities on Southampton Row for the London Central School.

Lethaby's ornament has an abstract quality which is shared with much other Arts and Crafts work, but it is unusual in its arcane character, although not unique in this for its time and place since this feature is found in the ornament of some other contemporary English architects like that of Lethaby's friend

¹⁰ The latter was actually done in collaboration with J.L. Ball, although it seems reasonable to credit the more unusual symbolic ornament on the building to Lethaby.

Ernest Barnsley. This attribute represents a peculiar aspect of Lethaby's thought in that the references to the past made through some of his ornament are more obscure, from the point of view of the layman for whom he professed to want to make art more relevant, than the common contemporary ornament of a historicizing nature which he sought to eliminate. This attribute does tie in, however, with another key part of Lethaby's thought—his belief that architectural work should include not only the “rational” (functionalism in all its aspects, utilitarian and otherwise) but also the “irrational”—that is, the mysterious and unexplained.

The role Lethaby played in the activities and achievements of certain organizations is another part of his overall contribution. Some of Lethaby's importance in this regard has already been brought up in mentioning his affiliation with education institutions, his involvement with the SPAB and his assistance in founding the Design and Industries Association.

The organizations which might also be noted here as having benefitted from Lethaby's involvement are those most closely linked to Arts and Crafts practice—the most important of these being the Art Workers Guild. Lethaby was a founder of this organization so essential in the development of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. Lethaby authored its organizational prospectus, in fact, and functioned over a long period as one of its leaders, including taking his turn, in a more formal expression of this, as the Guild's Master. Lethaby was also a founding member of the Guild's parent organization, the St. George Art Society and he helped found and served as president of an important offshoot of the Guild, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, whose activities were reported (with illustrations of work exhibited under the Society's auspices) in the periodical, the Studio. Lethaby's own craft work exhibited in the Society's shows was illustrated in this magazine of wide national and international circulation—read, for example, in Vienna by such eminent architects/designers as Wagner, Olbrich and Hoffman.

Finally, with respect to Lethaby's activities in organizations, one should note his briefly successful (1890-1892) attempt to create (in leadership of several other like-minded people) an Arts and Crafts firm along the line of Morris'. This enterprise, which was concerned with the design and construction of furniture and other craft objects and elements of décor was called Kenton and Co.

One last sphere of activity related to Lethaby's contribution to architecture should be mentioned, that of art history. Lethaby is justly regarded as one of the foremost English art historians of his day, particularly in regard to architecture, but also one who made particularly noteworthy contributions to knowledge about medieval art and, especially through his monograph on the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (written in collaboration with Harold Swainson), about Byzantine work. The last mentioned book, published in 1894, not only furnished new insights about this most important of all Byzantine architectural works but also showed a significant departure in terms of methodology from the essentially formalist approach to the analysis of art and architecture which prevailed at the time the volume appeared. The book, which is symptomatic of Lethaby's "inclusive" approach, can be regarded as a key work, attaching such importance, as it does in its discussion of this church, to the social, political, environmental and religious factors surrounding its construction. Lethaby developed a method of scholarly analysis/interpretation of architectural work in which extrinsic criteria figure importantly in addition to that which is usually labeled as intrinsic. The book also had a considerable effect, to touch on a related contribution by Lethaby, in stimulating the Byzantine Revival in the visual arts in England—an effect which, considering Lethaby's antipathy towards buildings done in the historical styles, he many not have viewed completely positively.¹¹

An earlier book by Lethaby, Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891), a book which deals mainly with the past but also contains some indication of Lethaby's thinking concerning contemporary architectural issues, discloses more directly Lethaby's interest in the mysterious and the occult in architecture. The book influenced a number of contemporary architects in the Arts and Crafts orbit—such men as Charles Townsend, Henry Wilson, Sidney Barnsley and even one of much greater importance, a key figure in progressive design activity in Britain, C.R. Mackintosh. Lethaby's book indeed focused on

¹¹ The design he helped create in connection with the Liverpool Cathedral competition, however, shows his own participation in the Byzantine Revival. Since Lethaby believed, as previously noted, that architecture (and this applied to architecture of his own time and that of the future as well as that of the past) should contain an irrational element in addition to the strictly rational and since Eastern culture seems often to suggest mystery and the occult to Westerners, he may have seen some positive aspects of the aforementioned Revival.

the idea of the irrational in architecture, and accorded it hospitable treatment. This approach provides further evidence of Lethaby's assimilative attitudes as does his attempt to make his material about the East, which is included in his 1891 book in substantial amounts, relevant for his own Western culture. In regard to this last point, it should be noted that Lethaby's book provides a good example, an unusual one taken in the context of English architectural writing of the time, of this kind of cyclically recurring Eastward-looking endeavor.

In overview one can observe that Lethaby made impressive contributions in a number of areas relating to architecture. One can also note that, in Lethaby's case, the fact that he contributed in such a variety of ways to architecture is an important basis for appreciating him in addition to acknowledging his beneficial effect in particular areas. Another point which might be made concerns Lethaby's preference for working behind the scenes and for functioning as part of a group rather than solo, although, in regard to the former, one should note that he often became the leader in group activities. Lethaby's influence was pervasive but because of the group work preferences just mentioned his personal imprint upon events is more difficult to identify and does not stand out as readily as that of a number of other architectural leaders.

3.

The paramount observation about Lethaby's theory has to do with its integrative character. Lethaby's theory of architecture is all encompassing which is unusual in the degree to which there is an attempt to identify and take into account relationships between not only the various compartments into which architectural activity might be divided but also those between architecture and affiliated activities and indeed, between architecture and society in general. The consideration of architectural issues in a larger context is a key attribute of Lethaby's theory as is the attempt, which developed as a consequence of this consideration, to reconcile that which presents itself as opposing, separated or not necessarily connected.

One fundamental subject of interest for any architectural theory is the reconciliation of theory and practice. For some prominent theorists who, like Lethaby, also have been practitioners, theory has had a life of its own, distinct and different from practice. This does not appear to be the case with Lethaby however, despite the words of some critics, and this was certainly not his intent that theory and practice not be closely connected. In Lethaby's own architectural work one can note the implementation of many of his ideas, but as his oeuvre of built work is small, a full translation of his theory into three dimensions did not occur. There were, however, a number of other architects who also tried to put Lethaby's ideas into practice.

Another related challenge for Lethaby involved the problem of reconciliation concerns architectural education and practice. Lethaby, as a prominent educator, demonstrably gave much attention to improving the linkage between the two, with concrete results.

Following Ruskin and Morris, Lethaby also worked on the problem of connections between architecture and society-at-large, trying to draw the two closer together. He tried to convince others that architecture should be seen as service to society. Similarly, Lethaby worked at the task of breaking down barriers to interaction between the avant-garde (although he also believed that the elitist aspect of works of art and architecture should disappear) and the man-on-the-street. Another related kind of reconciliatory interest involved an attempt, this also coming fairly straight-forwardly out of earlier Arts and Crafts tradition and the thinking of Morris and Ruskin, to describe an architecture which would be satisfying to the maker as well as to the user (and, at the same time, advancing the idea that the user might be more satisfied with a product by virtue of the fact that the maker's experience with it had been pleasant). One other feature of Lethaby's interest in architecture/society connections might be noted here. This, concerned with older architecture as opposed to contemporary work, involved his pioneering approach, noted earlier in reference to his monograph on the Hagia Sophia, in the pursuit of understanding old buildings through the utilization of extrinsically-oriented data as well as the intrinsic.

Integration for Lethaby also involved the problem of bringing about more effective interaction between the disciplines of art and science. He told of the necessity, in both architecture and society

generally, for the harmonious functioning of these in both thought and action. Related to this and to the problem he inherited from Morris and Ruskin concerning the quality of human work performed in conjunction with machine usage, is Lethaby's desire to bring about a resolution of problems arising between notions of workmanship and the modern products of science.

The question of uniting art and science can also be connected to another preoccupation of Lethaby—that of uniting the different kinds of “modern.” The English Arts and Crafts Movement's main contribution to modern architecture has to do with its artistic side, although many Arts and Crafts practitioners were, as well, very interested in new scientific knowledge and related technology and undertook experiments motivated by this. In Lethaby's thinking there is indicated in the later years, a desire to couple the aesthetic achievements of the English Arts and Crafts to the technical (machine-related) ones which were occurring on the Continent. Both kinds of achievements, as related to Modernism, can be seen to have a rational basis and can be associated with Lethaby's broadly-interpreted functionalism. Yet another type of integration appearing in Lethaby's theory is necessitated by Lethaby's requirement that both the “rational” (dependent on Lethaby's concept of functionalism, and other criteria) and the “irrational” (the component of mystery, magic or awe) be present in the ideal architecture. A point of view that would accommodate both needed to be developed he thought.

Looking at the relationship of contemporary architecture to that of the past shows still another side of the integrative character of Lethaby's theory. Lethaby did not dispose of questions about the nature of this relationship by maintaining, as did some other modern architectural thinkers, that the past was completely irrelevant but he did reject, like others whose thought has been linked to the development of the modern idiom, any continuance of building in the historical styles. For Lethaby, the contemporary, conventional means by which past architecture served present-day building, copyism and revivalism in the main, was unacceptable but this did not mean that the utilization of the architectural past in works of the present and future could be dispensed with. Instead, a different approach was thought to be needed, and Lethaby tried to articulate what this should be. A problem for Lethaby related to this concerned the employment of traditional construction methods and materials versus experimentation with new ones. In

this as in much else the advocate of a combinant method, Lethaby asserted that both approaches were valuable and necessary.

The holistic nature of Lethaby's theory is shown also in the attention he gave to discussing architecture within the context of what might be called "vertical" and "horizontal" *continua*. In the case of a "vertical" continuum Lethaby showed his interest in making architecture part of a harmonious whole by including it as part of a unified system of design activities of both smaller (for example, crafts design and the decoration of interiors) and larger (town planning, for example) scope. This included an emphasis on trying to make new construction compatible with but not copying architecture already existing in the context in which the new building would be placed and also have the new part harmonize with the natural elements of the building's locale.¹²

Lethaby's interest in terms of a "horizontal" continuum focused on the interaction of various callings involved in the constructive arts—especially addressing the problem of getting them to work together more effectively. Both education and practice of a more communal nature, Lethaby believed, would help bring about a greater harmony in the work of architects, engineers, artists, craftsmen, constructors, and others involved in building. The closer integration in architectural work of designer and executant (thinker and doer) is also an important part of this interest.

One final aspect of Lethaby's integrative attitude should be noted. This concerns his willingness to take into account lessons to be learned from non-British sources and to speak out as well about conditions abroad. Lethaby's interest, mentioned earlier, in discussing non-Western matters in his architectural writings (as seen in his book Architecture, Mysticism and Myth and the one on the Hagia Sophia) is part of this.

4.

In studying the various parts of Lethaby's theory, ample evidence for considering him a reformer can be found. The change from the status quo that Lethaby desired must be considered a radical one but

¹² This interest can be linked with Lethaby's utilization of extrinsic criteria in his analysis of historical architecture.

the way that change was to be accomplished could better be described as evolutionary rather than revolutionary—a contrast to the sudden and violent methods advocated by such architectural contemporaries on the Continent as the Futurists.

Whether the kind of change Lethaby advocated should be regarded as progressive or reactionary depends upon the issue treated, upon one's own perspective, and the point in Lethaby's career at which his thought is being considered. While Lethaby's message on the whole can reasonably be regarded as progressive (in the sense, at least, that it is part of an ongoing development which has not occurred previously and which is generally viewed as "good"), part of what he said could be termed reactionary, used here in a non-pejorative sense. For example, reactionary might be the applicable term in reference to the fact that, throughout his career, Lethaby clung to the Arts and Crafts ideal of returning, in some ways, to earlier conditions—those believed to be present in medieval times particularly. No doubt Lethaby's critics were tempted to associate his views with reactionism—especially in the later stages of his career when he persisted in saying, despite conditions vastly changed from those of his earlier life, that the work of hand-craftsmen ought to receive as much emphasis and consideration as that done with the aid of machines. Also, Lethaby's animosity in his later career to the developing modern architectural idioms on the Continent must have been viewed by some as reactionary.

The term conservative might also apply to Lethaby's thought, and not just in acknowledgement of his preservation interest. The word is useful (as is the previously mentioned "evolutionary") in describing the rate of change Lethaby preferred—even though the end result might be considered radical. Also, with respect to those facets of Lethaby's thought in which his view remained essentially unchanged throughout his career, what might be viewed as radical stances in his early days, as, for example, his embrace of some of Ruskin's ideas, might be looked upon as conservative in later ones.

5.

Some problems in Lethaby's theory, in the nature of inconsistencies occur because of his inclination to try to accommodate diverse points of view. For example, as a dedicated functionalist, he

sometimes advocated that mystery (and irrational elements in general) should be removed from architecture but, in accordance with the wider parameters of his thought, he also maintained at times that such was needed. Also, bringing up a point touched on earlier in another context, Lethaby, judging from various comments he made in his later years, seems to have been equally committed to championing the craftsman over the machine and to achieving a condition where there was equilibrium between the two.¹³ Such inconsistencies are not, however, pervasive in the expression of Lethaby's thought.

In the expression of Lethaby's thought as it was conveyed over the years there are not many major changes in point of view to be found although there are continual minor shifts. In later years, as suggested earlier, Lethaby did move toward a greater acceptance of the machine and of the kinds of building materials which were more dependent on industrialized processes and unskilled labor. In the later years also, there appears to be a diminution in Lethaby's claims as to the necessity of an irrational component in architecture, and he seems to have become in these years, as well, somewhat more internationally minded.¹⁴

¹³ The preceding examples are of more significance than the kind of problem that appears when Lethaby said in one place, in reference to the relationship of ornament to beauty in architecture, that beauty often ends with the inception of ornament and in another suggested (not specifically in reference to architecture but applicable to it) that ornament is needed for beauty. In considering these statements one can understand that Lethaby is referring in turn, to a kind of ornament which is undesirable and then to one which is. Also of lesser significance are cases like the one in which, in one place, Lethaby defined architecture as an art and in another as a science. In such a situation one might suppose that definitions which are incomplete (compared to what is known to be Lethaby's more complete outlook) have been given on purpose, for the sake of emphasis, in the context of a particular discussion.

Some inconsistencies between Lethaby's theory and his practice also exist. Reyner Banham has noted one which has to do with Lethaby's negative comments about the Picturesque in earlier British architecture and the fact that most of Lethaby's own architecture (and that of other Arts and Crafts architects) is very similar in aim and in effect to this. Another inconsistency, touched on earlier, involves Lethaby's criticism of historically-based ornament as used in contemporary work—that is, he maintained that such ornament was undesirable because it carried no meaning for contemporary society while in his own practice, in some of his works, he provided ornament of historical inspiration whose meaning must have been even less accessible to most people in his day.

¹⁴ In Lethaby's architectural designs one can note a change from the historicizing designs of the early competitions and his work with Shaw to the later, more generally ahistorical work he did in independent practice. (Lethaby's calls to abandon the use of historical architectural styles in contemporary practice came largely after he had ceased doing such things himself in his designs, so that charges about there being inconsistency between his theory and his practice in this regard do not seem to be much of a problem.) In Lethaby's independent practice there is, at a point, a noticeable shift (first discussed by David Martin) in Lethaby's work, one which sees Shaw replaced by Webb as the most detectable influence.

Lethaby's inclusive approach to architecture with its messy sort of vitality contrasts to that of the architectural leaders rising to prominence somewhat later on the Continent, though they were indebted, indirectly, to Lethaby's earlier contributions. There is a contrast to that of such relatively "clean-slate" revolutionaries as Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Gropius. For one thing, the approach to architecture of such people, although, like Lethaby, they emphasized service to society, was more prescriptive when it came to addressing the requirements of those who would use their architectural creations—that is, they tended more towards telling the client what he "needed." Although such architects on the Continent as those named paid careful attention to many of the requirements of the would-be users of their products, their approach was not as "inclusive" in terms of responding to human need as Lethaby's.¹⁵ While utility was commonly a prime concern of Lethaby's architecture and that of, for example Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, other priorities of Lethaby and those of such men varied widely.¹⁶ Although the desire not to imitate the past was an attribute shared by Lethaby with such progressive near-contemporaries on the Continent as Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Gropius, these all showed much less inclination than Lethaby to utilize the past—to try to connect present architecture to it or even to refer to it.¹⁷

Those Continental architectural leaders coming shortly after Lethaby developed and ultimately popularized, to the exclusion of much else, an architecture which was less "inclusive" than would be obtained through the implementation of Lethaby's theory. The approach of another early twentieth century leader in architecture, the American Frank Lloyd Wright was nearer to that of Lethaby (and he was closer in age as well). The inclusive qualities of Wright's work, however, for which some credit must

¹⁵ One exception among the first generation of architects associated with the International Style whose approach to addressing human needs was a little more like Lethaby's, at least in later years, was Richard Neutra.

¹⁶ Note, for example, the emphasis Lethaby placed on responding to local environmental factors like existing architectural forms and materials and his referential type of symbolism compared to the pre-occupation in Gropius' early work with developing an architectural expression based on the imagery of the machine.

¹⁷ But there are many commonalities of approach as well between Lethaby and these other architectural leaders, as in the field of education, for instance. A commitment to an integrated approach to the arts is found in Lethaby's education-related activities and also in that encountered, for example, at the institution in which Gropius and Mies van der Rohe played a role—the Bauhaus.

be given to the influence of the English Arts and Crafts and thus, perhaps to Lethaby, are not as rationally articulated in his theory as they are in Lethaby's.

6.

The comprehensiveness of Lethaby's thought as it concerns architecture, a comprehensiveness unique for its time, is one of the prime components of its value. Lethaby's thinking contributed markedly to the development of the aesthetic of the Early Modern on the Continent but in important ways, looking at it as a whole, his theory is the opposite of that which underlies the Continental work. In fact, and this seems to be an important point not previously made, Lethaby offered the last surviving fully-developed, non-reactionary alternative to Continental Modern before that idiom attained unquestioned hegemony in the progressive architectural circles of the West. In more recent times architects like the Americans Robert Venturi and Charles Moore, those whom Robert Stern has called "inclusivists" have questioned a number of the assumptions upon which the prevailing architectural outlook, derived substantially from the early modernism of Continental Europe and have instead pursued a line of thinking much more similar to Lethaby's.¹⁸ To the extent that this point of view (re)gains acceptance, the Modern Movement as founded on the International Style of the earlier years of the twentieth century would need, it would seem, to be re-identified as essentially a departure, although a long-lived and extremely important one, from a path of development upon which Lethaby's thinking is more centrally situated than has been acknowledged.

Lethaby was one of the most important if not the most important living architectural theorist in Britain for about four decades. After the turn of the twentieth century, which marked roughly the quarter-point of this time period, Lethaby was more important in Britain as an architectural theorist than such

¹⁸ In practice too there are interesting similarities between Lethaby's work and that of such architects as Venturi and Moore. In Lethaby's works, despite, or perhaps because of the diverse considerations he attempted to respond to, there seems to be a lack of unity, in the formal sense. It may be that this is a necessary consequence of trying, as Robert Venturi might say, to address the problem of a greater, less obvious but more inclusive kind of unity.

well-recognized and appreciated thinkers as Ashbee and Mackintosh.¹⁹ Also, In a context wider than that defined by Britain's home territories, Lethaby should be acknowledged as one of the most important architectural theorists of the twentieth century.²⁰

Lethaby's impact has been far-reaching although, overall, this is more difficult to assess than in the case of other important figures because with Lethaby, a substantial part of the contribution comes indirectly through his impact as a leader of the widely influential English Arts and Crafts Movement. Lethaby belongs unquestionably, in the period from the 1890s through the 1920s, in the company of the acknowledged architectural theorists of the first rank who were his contemporaries—that is, in the company of Berlage, Sullivan, Van de Velde, Wagner and Wright. Lethaby emerged in the 1890s to share prominence as an architectural theorist in Britain with such luminaries as Morris, Mackintosh and Ashbee (and people of slightly lesser stature like Thomas Graham Jackson). Lethaby's rise to importance as a theorist by the 1890s placed him then in the company, to name those outside Britain, of Wagner, Van de Velde and Sullivan, and to mention those perhaps somewhat less important, of Choisy and Guadet.²¹ Even in the 1920s, Lethaby could hold his own, in terms of his significance as a theorist, with Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe.

A more thorough discussion of individual topics related to Lethaby's theory follows. In this, Lethaby is allowed many opportunities to express his ideas in his own words since the inimitable

¹⁹ Outside Britain at this time, Mackintosh (and Baillie-Scott) had more effect, but rather through their practice. Lethaby's importance abroad in the first years of the twentieth century, attributable both to his theory and to his practice, was, however, not inconsiderable.

²⁰ Some of Lethaby's work gained wide familiarity abroad, especially in Germany, through descriptions and illustrations of it in the publications of the German architect Muthesius, who wrote enthusiastically around the turn of the century of what he considered progressive work in England. Muthesius' praise of Lethaby focused not only on his architectural work but also on his success as an educator.

Since Muthesius was also enthusiastic about Norman Shaw (probably more so than he was about any other of the English architects who were somewhat older than Lethaby) he published illustrations of and discussed a number of Shaw's works. This meant additional exposure for Lethaby, although he was not given credit in Muthesius' publications in the context of showing photos of Shaw's works. There are a number of instances where Muthesius publicized commissions of Shaw's in which Lethaby's participation in the design was significant and/or for which he made the finished perspectives and other drawings.

²¹ Wright could be added to the primary list of architectural theorists in the first decade of the twentieth century and Loos and Sant' Elia to a slightly more secondary one for this same period.

articulation he gave his thought (including the many pungent aphorisms) is also a genuine part of his contribution that should not be lost completely through paraphrasing.

Bibliographical Note:

In the 1930s, after Lethaby's death, former colleagues Reginald Blomfield and Robert Weir both wrote lengthy accounts of Lethaby—the one by the former being published in 1932, and the latter in 1938 (although delivered orally, originally, in 1932). In the next decade Blomfield also accorded Lethaby some attention in his biography (1940) of Norman Shaw, for whom Lethaby served for a number of years as chief assistant. In the last years of the 1940s ('48 and '49) John Brandon-Jones talked on the radio about Lethaby and also published this commentary. In the following decade there were an increasing number of article-length accounts of Lethaby generally, or of some particular aspect of his career. That by Noel Rooke in 1950 discussing Lethaby's work (and Webb's and Morris') was one of the first. Next might be mentioned Basil Ward's series of lectures on Lethaby given at the Royal College of Art in London in the years 1953-1955. In 1957, the centenary of Lethaby's birth, A.R.N. Roberts, Brian Thomas, Basil Ward and Robert Weir all published general, article-length accounts of Lethaby and that year also, a symposium in Lethaby's honor was held. In connection with the symposium, accounts by Brian Jones, John Brandon-Jones, Basil Ward, Talbot Rice and A.R.N. Roberts about various aspects of Lethaby's life were published. In 1957 also came what seems to be the first university thesis on Lethaby—David Martin's, in connection with his baccalaureate degree at the University of Manchester.

At the beginning of the 1960's, Lethaby is the focus (along with Geoffrey Scott) of a chapter in Reyner Banham's Theory of Design in the First Machine Age (1960) and Julius Posener, a bit later, in 1964, treated Lethaby as an important character in his Anfänge des Functionalismus (The Beginnings of Functionalism). In the first half of the 1960s also, Nikolaus Pevsner wrote a short piece focusing on Lethaby's church at Brockhampton. Similar to the treatment of Lethaby by Banham and Posener already mentioned, is one from the 1970s, Robert Macleod's in Style and Society (1971), which gave Lethaby major attention (a special chapter) within the context of a broader discussion. Somewhat later, a special section on Lethaby written by Godfrey Rubens can be found in the ambitious volume Edwardian Architecture and its Origins (Alistair Service, editor and contributor) of 1975. Lethaby's name appears frequently in other parts of this book as well and he is accorded quite a bit of attention in Service's later Edwardian Architecture (1977). Lethaby is also a major focus of attention in John Brandon-Jones' article from 1970, "After William Morris" but is less so (although mentioned a number of times) in Anscombe and Gere's book of 1978 on the Arts and Crafts Movement, The Arts and Crafts in Britain and America. In the mid-1970s, two theses on Lethaby besides this one, were initiated—Charlotte Brown's (University of North Carolina), completed, 1974) and one by Godfrey Rubens in England. The first of these addressed primarily, problems of historiography and the second is intended (it has not been seen in its entirety by this author) as a general biography of Lethaby. Neither, however (and this is also true of Martin's earlier study) takes as primary subject Lethaby's theory. From the 1970's also is Rubens' commentary on Lethaby written in introduction to a reprinting (1975) of Lethaby's Architecture, Mysticism and Myth.

As to the publications paying some attention to Lethaby which have emerged in the 1980s, one should mention Lionel Lambourne's general book from 1980 on the Arts and Crafts Movement (Utopian Craftsman) wherein Lethaby is perhaps given more importance than the earlier, similar work (just mentioned) by Anscombe and Gere. In Peter Davey's book (also published in 1980) which addresses specifically the architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement (this is, in fact, its title), Lethaby is allotted more coverage than in either of the other two books just brought up and, perhaps owing in part to the narrower scope of Davey's work, Lethaby is presented (an entire chapter being devoted to him) as a figure of much greater consequence. As to even more recent acknowledgement of Lethaby, in reference to more particular topics, one can note Gavin Stamp's The Great Perspectivists (1982) which recognized Lethaby's contribution as a delineator. As to acknowledgment of Lethaby in works opposite in scope to that just commented upon, that is, those of very wide purview, it can be noted that there has been an increase with the passing years in the importance accorded Lethaby by commentators. This can be seen in comparing earlier general works on modern architecture such as Pevsner's Pioneers of Modern Design (the initial 1936 version or later) or Hitchcock's Architecture: 19th and 20th Centuries (first published 1958) with Kenneth Frampton's Modern Architecture (1980). In the first two Lethaby is accorded less significance (barely any, in fact) compared to the third

CHAPTER I

COMMENTS ABOUT LETHABY'S LIFE IN GENERAL AND ABOUT HIS CAREER

Introductory Remark

Before proceeding to discussions specifically about Lethaby's theory it would be useful to understand the context in which Lethaby's thought developed. Numerous sources can be consulted to gain knowledge of the history of England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both generally and specifically in regard to architecture. Not so readily available, however, is information about Lethaby's life in particular. Because of this circumstance, some biographical information on Lethaby, including that about how his theory of architecture was disseminated, is offered in this chapter. The biographical information offered is that which has seemed most useful in understanding Lethaby's theory of architecture.

Pre-London Days

There are some circumstances of Lethaby's early life (i.e. before he came to London) that should be mentioned because these bear importantly on the ideas later associated with him. In his early days, the models for some of Lethaby's distinctive traits, factors in his achievements, had already exercised their influence—especially, this is true concerning Lethaby's tendency to pursue a diverse set of interests (with architecture and the crafts at the core) and to be an activist. Lethaby may have been pre-disposed to championing the craftsman and to believing that the activities of the craftsman and those of the architect should be closely linked. Lethaby's father Richard Pyle Lethaby (d. 1904) who helped raise him in Barnstaple, was himself a craftsman—a carver and a gilder.¹ Another thing to note is that Lethaby's inclination to formulate and adopt outspoken views on architectural matters may have been facilitated by his familial religious and political situation. Lethaby's family belonged to a sect known as the Bible

¹ Basil Ward, in his preface to Lethaby's *Architecture*, 1955, ed., p. xxi.

Christians, who were looked upon in some circles at least in his time as somewhat non-conformist.² The fact that Lethaby's father was a supporter of the more radical, reform-minded political elements of the times may also have encouraged his son's outspokenness.³

Lethaby's economic roots seem relevant to the positions he later adopted. His were those of the less affluent reaches of the middle class—those of the skilled craftsman, typically independently employed or working under contract. His most immediate architectural environment, his home in Barnstaple at #2 Ebberly Lawn, where he dwelt from about the age of five until he left the town about fifteen years later, would not seem to be of rich architectural inspiration, however.⁴ The Ebberly Lawn quarters were (and are) part of a series of contiguous row-type dwellings made-over from their original use as military barracks. Presenting a somewhat Neo-Classical appearance, these sturdy structures perhaps served more as an inspiration for sound building and adaptive re-use than anything else.

Lethaby's home, Barnstaple, about 15,000 in population presently (and perhaps less in Lethaby's days there), is a municipality endowed with a long history—one to which Lethaby lent his enthusiasms as a historian. Known at least since Roman times (as Barum then) and laying claim to being the oldest borough in England, the town would have offered Lethaby from the days of his youth plenty of architectural samples for him to expertise first-hand—samples dating back at least to medieval times – to encourage his interest in architectural history.⁵

² Ward, Preface to Architecture, p. xxi.

³ The observation about Lethaby's father obtains from Ward in his Preface to Architecture, p. xxiii. Barnstaple, situated in north Devon in southwest England, would share the region's reputation as a stronghold of England's Liberal Party, an organization much more debilitated now than then as a political force. Lethaby himself preferred the more sweeping solutions to society's problems proposed by the Socialists (that is, the Fabian Society).

⁴ Information from Ward would put the start of his occupancy here at about 1862. "William Lethaby's Buildings" in Alastair Service's Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, 1975, p. 131 (Preace. 1955 ed. of Architecture, p. xxi). Rubens said he left at the end of 1877; Ward, p. xii, said Feb., 1978. Martin in his thesis (in the Chronological Index) indicated that Lethaby left Lauder's employ in 1876.

⁵ The medieval sectors of the city are still indicated by the street pattern and some buildings from that time are located (some still existing) not many yards from Lethaby's home.

Lethaby's formal learning experiences included what Basil Ward has described as a "regular grammar school education."⁶ Of more direct bearing on his career in architecture, however, was his being articled to the Barnstaple architect, Alexander Lauder (b. 1837-d. 1921) at about the age of fourteen (c. 1871).⁷ This event apparently terminated his daytime academic life for good, although his school experiences continued for a number of years through schooling received after working hours. Lethaby stayed with Lauder perhaps as long as six or seven years before leaving Barnstaple to seek employment in other parts of England and it seems likely that the diverse interests Lethaby later pursued have some basis in his association with this multi-talented master.⁸ A few words on the career of Lethaby's first mentor are, thus, in order.

Lauder came from Scotland, perhaps from near Edinburgh, and had been articled to an architect named Black in that city. His father had been an engineer, but eschewing this profession and architecture, too at first, Lauder took up painting.⁹ Lauder, perhaps by dint of his mother's connections in the region, eventually came south to north Devonshire in England. Like Lethaby, Lauder showed a strong interest in the crafts as well as the Fine Arts. He led in reviving the tradition of North Devon earthenware through his founding of a pottery.¹⁰ Like Lethaby also, he attempted the integration of his craft activities and his political theories—the former seen to some extent, perhaps, as a beneficent vehicle in the implementation of the latter. His attempt to aid workers made jobless by "the machine" by channeling them into craft production, was consonant with his political theories.¹¹

⁶ Ward, Preface to Architecture, p. xxi.

⁷ Ruben in Service's Edwardian Architecture, p. 131, said that Lethaby was articled about the age of 14. Martin, in the Chronological Index of his thesis, says 1873.

⁸ It has not been possible to learn whether Lethaby was articled for a specific period and whether he was released from this arrangement early, left at the end of the period as planned or stayed in Barnstaple awhile after the apprenticeship was over.

⁹ He terminated his architectural apprenticeship to do so.

¹⁰ Brian Thomas, "Formative Years," part I of "William Richard Lethaby, 1857-1931, A Symposium in Honor of his Centenary," R.I.B.A. Journal, April 1957, Third Series, Vol. 64, No. 6, pp. 218-219.

¹¹ Thomas, p. 219.

Lauder included many hand-crafted elements in his own architectural work—chimneys are a good example—and this testifies to his interest in giving a place for fine craftsmanship in building construction. His practice served both the big landowners and people in the towns of an area which extended over a large part of north Devon and well into neighboring Somerset. Church commissions gave Lauder's practice an even greater range, particularly the number of commissions he obtained from the Methodists. Lethaby in Lauder's employ was thus exposed to the activities of a fairly varied practice—mill buildings, such as Stanbury Mill (Barnstaple), manor houses like Raveline Manor (Barnstaple), commercial buildings like the Squire's Building (Tully Street, Barnstaple), and churches like Wesleyan Chapel on Boutport Street (Barnstaple).¹²

Although this variety can be seen reflected in Lethaby's own short practice and in the various types of buildings he worked on under Lauder, it is the churches with which he was involved in Lauder's employ which would seem to be the most significant overall, in view of Lethaby's later historical studies, the content of his sketches while touring, his preservation studies, his pioneering use of exposed concrete in church architecture, and his later appointment as surveyor to Westminster Abbey. It should be noted, however, that most of the churches for which Lauder obtained the commission, at least those known to this author, seem to have been done before Lethaby's arrival—mainly products of the 1860s—and thus Lethaby may have been familiar with them only as finished works.¹³

It should also be noted that Lauder was not loath to experiment with materials in new ways, nor to try new mechanical systems. These qualities appear later as attributes of Lethaby's thought and practice as well. Lauder was also accomplished at winning competitions—a skill which must have rubbed off on the young Lethaby, who later proved himself successful at this. Like Lethaby's father, Lauder also had a

¹² The latter two categories both included examples in the Gothic Revival mode.

¹³ One church that Lethaby might have been involved in was the Methodist Church (now destroyed) that Lauder built in Bletchingly, near Redhill, less than twenty miles south of London. Lethaby's involvement, if any, must have been minor since he would have been no more than seventeen at the time this Gothic Revival building was constructed. Earlier Lauder churches, besides the aforementioned chapel from 1863, include a church (from 1864) near Barnstaple, in Ifracombe, the Newport Chapel (from 1868) in Barnstaple, and two churches from 1869—at Silsden (Addingham) and Yeovil (Somerset)—all Methodist.

talent as a carver and gilder, and as a carpenter as well. He might have demonstrated to Lethaby and others in the office, how an architect might integrate these skills into an architectural practice.¹⁴

Lethaby knew Lauder not only as his architectural master, but also through Lethaby's after-hours schooling at a local educational institution. Lauder had an interest in improving the training of craftsmen and was important in the founding of a local school of art, the Barnstaple School of Art.¹⁵ Lethaby attended this school and had won the first of many prizes there by the age of 12.¹⁶ Perhaps the attention generated by the winning of this and/or the later prizes resulted in Lethaby's placement in Lauder's office.¹⁷ Other educational activities during Lethaby's minority included night classes at Barnstaple's Literary and Scientific Institute where he again encountered Lauder as his teacher. Thus, Lethaby's various experiences with Lauder brought him under the influence of a person who, like himself in later years, combined a) reform-minded politics, b) concern for the crafts, c) an architectural practice committed to producing buildings in which the other arts were to be well integrated, and d) an interest in teaching.

Lethaby's next architectural experience took place over a period of about two years. This period started with Lethaby's departure from Barnstaple and ended with his arrival in London. At the beginning of the period, he found employment for a time in the office of the architect Richard Waite in Duffield, a suburb of Derby. Some data in Lethaby's sketchbooks kept at the R.I.B.A. in London show him staying in Duffield from early January, 1878 until late November of the same year. The same sources indicate that Lethaby was next in nearby Leicester (about 28 miles from Duffield) for a few months in early 1879 and

¹⁴ Lauder also did book illustrations and wrote poetry, and had a successful political career later as Mayor of Barnstaple. Lethaby took up the first two of these pursuits later himself.

¹⁵ Actually situated in the adjacent community of Pilton. Thomas (1957), pp. 218-219.

¹⁶ Rubens, in Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, p. 131; other prizes included one in 1873 and another as late as 1878.

¹⁷ Thomas (1957), p. 219. Lauder is known to have started other able students there as well.

then, back in Duffield, perhaps with Waite again, from mid-March until his departure for London in early August, 1879.¹⁸

During Lethaby's brief stay in Duffield and Leicester the public exposition of Lethaby's graphic and design skills began. In the issue of April 8, 1876 issue of The Architect Lethaby's perspective drawing of a London chapel designed by Lauder appeared. In January of the next year the Building News announced the formation of a "Designing Club"—a showcase through publishing for talented young architectural designers. Architectural problem were periodically posed by the administrators of the club, and the two or three best solutions to each published. Cash prizes were also awarded. Lethaby quickly distinguished himself in this activity. As early as February, 1877, drawings of Lethaby's were published in connection with the magazine's design competitions and at least thirteen more followed before the magazine discontinued the club idea near the end of 1879.¹⁹

London—Shaw's Office

A more important period in Lethaby's architectural career began (probably in 1879) with his employment in the office of that giant among English Victorian architects, Richard Norman Shaw.²⁰ Lethaby must have attracted Shaw's attention by the publication of the previously-mentioned graphic

¹⁸ A more precise description of Lethaby's architectural activities while residing in Derbyshire and Leicestershire was not available.

¹⁹ The drawing published Feb. 23 was a fireplace design. Other designs published included "A Mountain Chapel," one for "A Lodge with a Covered Entrance" and "A Cemetery Chapel." (See Appendix B, "Lethaby's Work in the Visual Arts" for more information about these and others.) A number of Lethaby's published entries were awarded first-place; these were usually submitted under the nom-de-plume "Debut." Lethaby's obituary in the Western Morning News (1934) stated that many of these Building News entries were submitted during his days in Derby.

²⁰ Lethaby, in Ernest Gimson—His Life and Work (written in collaboration with Alfred H. Powell and F.L. Griggs, 1924, p. 2 (London, E. Benn Ltd.) stated that Lethaby had been with Shaw since 1878. This is apparently contradicted in one of the sketch books just mentioned which indicates Lethaby's arriving in London in August, 1879. The accuracy of the relevant entry may itself be questioned however; it may not be one of the original ones (as suggested by different ink, writing implement, etc.). The entry may represent a later attempt by Lethaby to clarify the chronology of this period in response to a biographical inquiry. It may not even have been written by Lethaby, although it appears so, judging by the syntax and the hand.

work and by his winning in 1879 at the age of 22 of a more prestigious architectural prize than those already noted, the Soane Medallion.²¹

Lethaby, arriving in Shaw's office at the age of 22, brought with him as much as eight years of previous architectural experience as well as the evidence of his prowess in competitions. Lethaby was hired as first lieutenant to Shaw, then about 48 years old and soon, John Brandon-Jones tells us, was given complete charge of the buildings on which he was assigned to work.²² Working with Shaw, one of the most successful and talented English architects of his generation, was a momentous opportunity for Lethaby. Here he acquired premium architectural experience. Of particular importance, Shaw reinforced the interest in experimentation (Shaw undertook some of the most interesting experiments in concrete of any architect in England of his time) and a regard for craftsmanship which had already been inculcated in Lethaby through his Barnstaple experiences. Ernest Newton (1856-1922) who Lethaby replaced in this high position in Shaw's firm left the same year that Lethaby came, to begin what was to become a successful architectural practice in partnership with E.S. Prior.²³

²¹ Also his design was for a House for a Learned Society was published that year in the Building News. The Medallion was, of course, named for the prominent eighteenth century English architect, John Soane. The entries in the competition for the Soane Medallion may have been received by late 1878. Prominent architects often served, then as now, on the juries of such competitions and Shaw, possibly as a jurist, may have noticed Lethaby's talents even prior to the official conclusion of the contest. Lethaby himself, who may after all be correct, contradicts most other sources and states that he had been with Shaw since 1878 (Ernest Gimson, op. cit., 1924, p. 1). In 1972, in The Builder (Jan. 27, 1922, p. 153) Lethaby said that he entered Shaw's office at 22.

Lethaby stated later that his preference at the time he entered Shaw's office was really that of William Butterfield, but that, in an otherwise successful job interview with Butterfield, he had erroneously stressed his success in competitions. (William R. Lethaby, Philip Webb and his Work, Oxford University Press, London, 1935, p. 69.). Butterfield, unbeknownst to the young applicant, was dead-set against this kind of activity and told Lethaby so. That apparently ended his chance of employment there although Lethaby later encountered Butterfield as a teacher at the Royal Academy. Lethaby always maintained a high regard for Butterfield's work and a friendship developed.

²² "The Architectural Work of W.R. Lethaby," Brandon-Jones' contribution to "William Richard Lethaby, 1857-1931," R.I.B.A.J., April, 1957, Vol. 64, No. 6, p. 219

²³ Newton, who was, at least for a time, in the Arts and Crafts orbit, saw frequent publication of his works in The Studio (the periodical founded in 1893 specifically to foster the Arts and Crafts viewpoint). In the early decades of the twentieth century, Newton's works, like Lethaby's, were also published in German architectural books such as Muthesius' Das Modern Landhaus and seine innere ausstattung (1905).

Lethaby's stay with Shaw lasted about eleven years—until 1889, when he set up for himself.²⁴ This period may have seen more of Lethaby's architectural ideas translated into brick and mortar than the following one in which he practice independently. His position as second-in-command in Shaw's office was made much more meaningful because of the latter's policy of giving him a relatively free hand in the decision process. At least sixty new commissions, including some orders for alterations and remodeling passed through Shaw's office during the period of Lethaby's employment.²⁵ While it was true that the most often-cited work of Shaw's oeuvre, namely, Leys Wood (1866 ff) and New Zealand Chambers (1871 ff) preceded Lethaby's employment, a proportionate number of Shaw's finest and most significant works were carried out during the time Lethaby was with him. The developments in Beford Park (from c. 1878), Albert Hall Mansions (1879), the manor house "Dawpool," near Birkenhead (1882), the second house at 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead (1888), New Scotland Yard (1888), and Holy Trinity Church, Latimer Road, London (1889) fall into the period when Lethaby's significant involvement in any particular project is probable.

²⁴ Lethaby gives this date in his book on Gimson (p. 2). Other sources give different dates: F.W. Troup gave 1890 in "William R. Lethaby," (Obituary), R.I.B.A. Journal, Vol. 35, No. xxxviii, Aug. 8, 1931, p. 697. Martin in his 1957 thesis (appended chronological table) noted that Lethaby left Shaw in 1891, but it is possible that the former may have gotten his own practice going before this date. Lethaby apparently was succeeded as principal assistant in Shaw's office by Percy Norman Gingham (1865-?), who began there as an office boy just after Lethaby came and later was articted there. Gingham relinquished his position as chief assistant in 1896 but continued working for Shaw off and on until 1899. Lethaby refers to being in Shaw's office a dozen years. Drawing on this, if he came in 1879, then he must have left in 1891; Ward has said Lethaby arrived in London late in 1879 (p. xxv, Preface to Architecture). Lethaby was born Jan. 18, 1857 (Ward, Preface to 1955 ed. of Architecture, p. xxi) so he was 22 in early 1879. Following convention, when Lethaby departed, Shaw provided a "setting-up" commission—thus passing on to him the desirable commission of planning the manor house Avon Tyrell in the New Forest for Lord and Lady Manners. (The correspondence Lethaby carried on with these clients in the planning stages of the project seems to begin in August of 1890.) The exact date when Lethaby left Shaw may not be exceptionally significant since, while still in Shaw's employ, Lethaby seems to have occasionally collaborated with and done some work for other architects as well as doing some work on his own and since, after setting up on his own, he continued occasionally to work for Shaw as well as others.

²⁵ Any effort to define conclusively the extent of Lethaby's involvement in working on projects under Shaw would certainly develop into an extended study in its own right. This task must remain outside the bounds of the present discussion although some information on this may be found in Appendix B, "Lethaby's Work in the Visual Arts."

Shaw's office offered a very stimulating environment for Lethaby.²⁶ This was due to the personality, intellect, and talent of Shaw himself and to that of the professional staff he assembled. At least ten of Lethaby's two dozen known fellow employees at Shaw's went on to establish important careers of their own in some activity relating to architecture.

Besides Newton, one of the most interesting of these fellow employees at Shaw's (and one who became a close associate of Lethaby) was Sydney Howard Barnsley. Barnsley worked for Shaw for about two years (c. 1885-87) and, a few years after (1891), demonstrated how an arts and crafts philosophy could be successfully combined in architecture with the emerging Byzantine Revival. A brother, Ernest, who also became one of Lethaby's close colleagues, was working in the offices of another eminent contemporary, that of John Sedding, when Sidney Barnsley and Lethaby were at Shaw's. The two brothers served as an important link between Shaw's and Sedding's offices, a connection between Lethaby and his colleagues at the one location and friends like Gimson (and Sedding himself) at the other. Like Ernest Gimson, who trained with Isaac Barradale in Leicestershire and then with the more well-known Sedding, Sydney took the commitment to craftsmanship to the ultimate. With his brother, Ernest, and Gimson, Sydney later effectively retired from architectural practice to set up a craft workshop in Gloucestershire.²⁷ Another Fellow worker in Shaw's office worth mentioning here was Gerald Callcott Horsley. Articled to Shaw during Lethaby's first year there, he stayed on as an assistant before pursuing an independent career which included service (1911-1913) as President of the Architectural Association. The immediately previous President of the A.A. (1910-1911) was another successful graduate of Shaw's office, Arthur Keen, who was articled to Shaw about the time of Lethaby's arrival. He left four years later to assist Ernest Newton before developing a well-regarded and sizeable practice of his own. Another

²⁶ See, for example, Davey, p. 46; Nikolaus Pevsner, "Richard Norman Shaw" in Saint's Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, p. 52 (as revised based on earlier publications going back to "Richard Norman Shaw, 1831-1912," in The Architectural Review LXXXIX, 1941, pp. 41-46, and especially John Brandon-Jones' "After William Morris," Artifex, Vol. 4, 1970, pp. 52-53.

²⁷ Gimson, whose name will come up later in this study in other contexts did not actually retire from architectural practice but was so committed to performing large amounts of craftwork called for in his buildings that the number (and size) of the buildings he was able to work on were thus limited.

Shaw employee who eventually acquired his own good-sized practice was Robert Weir Schultz—a Scot partially of Germany ancestry. He worked in Shaw’s office from c. 1884-86 and later in the office of Ernest George (who had trained Edwin Lutyens) before beginning his own practice in 1891.

To complete a discussion of the most eminent of Lethaby’s fellow employees at Shaw’s one can mention the three most scholarly and well-educated—Mervyn E. Macartney, Edward Schroder Prior, and Harold Swainson. Before being articled to Shaw in 1878, Macartney had been educated at Oxford; Prior, who was articled to Shaw in 1874, and Swainson who was in Shaw’s office from c. 1890 (until 1892) had been schooled at Cambridge. Macartney, who had his own considerable practice by 1882, further distinguished himself through his appointment as Surveyor to St. Paul’s Church (1905-1931).²⁸ Prior’s stay in Shaw’s office seems to have only briefly overlapped Lethaby’s, and the former set up on his own in 1880. Besides designing such prominent Arts and Crafts work as “The Barn,” Foxhole, Hill Road, Exmouth, Devon (1896-97) and “Home Place” near Holt, northern Norfolk (1903-05), Prior became Slade Professor at Cambridge.²⁹ Swainson joined Shaw’s office force after Lethaby had begun his own practice, but their acquaintance must have been almost inevitable, since Lethaby still frequently visited the office and did occasional work for Shaw. At any rate, one of Lethaby’s most well-known historical studies (on the church of Santa Sophia at Constantinople) was produced in collaboration with Swainson after the two journeyed there together in 1894.

Two further observations might be made to indicate the quality of the intellectual atmosphere at Shaw’s office during Lethaby’s years there. The first concerns the founding, in 1884, of the Art Workers’ Guild, so important a vehicle for the advancement of the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. The founding members were Lethaby, Newton, Macartney, and Horsley, all members or former

²⁸ This coincided almost exactly with Lethaby’s tenure as Surveyor to Westminster Abbey. Also, Macartney was knighted in 1930. Andrew Saint in Richard Norman Shaw, Yale University Press, London, 1976, p. 439, gives 1874 as the date that Prior was articled to Shaw. Alistair Service in Edwardian Architecture, Oxford University Press, London, 1977, p. 207, gives the date as 1872.

²⁹ Lethaby himself applied for this post in 1910.

members of Shaw's office.³⁰ The second concerns the important roles some of Lethaby's colleagues at Shaw's later played in the early conduct in one of Britain's most influential architectural periodicals, the Architectural Review, which first appeared in 1896. Mervyn Macartney was its third editor, serving a fairly long term of duty from 1905 to 1913. Ernest Newton followed as editor for a shorter period.³¹ Likewise the editorial committee of this publication, in 1901 for example, was stocked with Lethaby's former office colleagues at Shaw's; among the fourteen or so members that year (besides Shaw himself) were Prior, Horsley, Macartney and Newton.³²

The termination of Lethaby's stay with Shaw essentially completed (at the age of 32) the assimilation of that type of practical learning an architect gains as an employee under the supervision of a more experienced professional. However, Shaw has been quoted as saying that he himself was the pupil, Lethaby the teacher.³³

Other Influences and Associations—Further Schooling

While he worked in Shaw's offices in London, Lethaby attended classes at the Royal Academy. He entered into studies there in July of 1880, shortly after joining Shaw and continued at least into 1882.³⁴ At the Academy he also encountered Shaw as a teacher, calling to mind his earlier experience in working with Lauder concurrently in both a professional and academic environment. Not only was Lethaby

³⁰ Service, Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, p. 5. Martin, in his thesis, add to this list the name of Schultz (Weir) who was also in Shaw's office at this time, as well as those of Heywood Sumner, George Frampton (the sculptor) and J.T. Micklethwaite. Lethaby himself in 1883 prepared the program which developed into that of the A.W.G.

³¹ The first editor (1896-1901) was Henry (Harry) Wilson (1864-1934), a pupil and later a young partner of Sedding whose practice he later took over. Wilson also designed a cathedral in British Columbia and worked in and wrote about the crafts (for example, Silverwork and Jewelry, published in 1905). Ernest Newton's son became the next editor, keeping the post into the 1920s.

³² Other influential arts and crafts-oriented architects on the board included Leonard Stokes and Halsey Ricardo. John Belcher and Reginald Blomfield, also on that 1901 board, held similar views before they became immersed in successful practices in a classicizing mode.

³³ Shaw's words were in response to a remark labeling Lethaby as his pupil: "No, on the contrary, it is I who am Lethaby's pupil." (R.W.S. Weir, William Richard Lethaby, 1938, p. 6)

³⁴ Lethaby won a prize there in that year for an "Early English Gothic Design."

instructed by Shaw at the Royal Academy, but also by Shaw's mentor, George Edmund Street in whose office, as in Shaw's, some of the most important figures in the Arts and Crafts movement (as well as others who were to be prominent in English architectural development in the latter half of the nineteenth century) had at one time worked.³⁵

Alfred Waterhouse was also a teacher of the Royal academy, serving as visiting critic, during Lethaby's years of student involvement there.³⁶ Another of Lethaby's teachers at the Academy was Richard Phené Spiers (1838-1916), England's first Beaux-Arts-trained architect. Spiers reportedly encouraged students to read Beaux Arts architectural classics like the works of Durand and those of more recent French architectural figures like Choisy and Guadet.³⁷ There was certainly much in the architectural design methodology which Lethaby espoused which would entail the resounding rejection of the Beaux Arts viewpoint, yet in Lethaby's writing, he still acknowledged being inspired by such French authors.

Other Associations—Webb, Morris, Organizations

Thus far, something has been mentioned of Lethaby's various academic activities and the circumstances of his architectural employment. The effects of these events on the formation of Lethaby's architectural theory were certainly of consequence. Yet the single greatest influence on Lethaby's architectural theory must surely be the thinking of William Morris' most important architectural associate, Philip Webb (1831-1915). Lethaby suggested as much himself, as can be found on the first page of his biography of Webb:

It must be said at once that the writer of these notes is drawn by most uncritical admiration and reverence to make this little memorial. I write not because I can judge Philip Webb, but

³⁵ In the Arts and Crafts category this included two of Lethaby's chief architectural "deities" Philip Webb and William Morris, as well as Leonard Stokes. Other prominent architects to come out of Street's office included the Gothic Revivalist already mentioned, John Dando Sedding, the eclectic T.E.Colcutt and of course, Shaw himself.

³⁶ Friends of Lethaby among fellow pupils at the R.A. included Reginald Blomfield and Arthur Beresford Pite (1861-1934), a pupil and later partner of John Belcher.

³⁷ Service, Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, p. 446.

rather that in his life I find a means of judging my own...My subject as I see it is—the architect as hero.³⁸

In his own thinking, Lethaby tried to be as consistent with Webb's ideas on architecture as possible. Webb's theory functioned again and again as a touchstone throughout Lethaby's life.³⁹ In the later decades of his life, however, dilemmas materialized. Conditions in the world in general and in architecture in particular had so changed that Webb's solutions were not only inadequate but incongruously remote from the problems being posed. Lethaby, however, never seemed to acknowledge the necessity of choosing between two paths—i.e. between absolute adherence to Webb's tenets and altering Arts and Crafts dogma to fit changed conditions. In later years, Lethaby pursued the latter path while continuing to give lip service, at least, to the former.

The major opportunity for Lethaby to acquaint himself with Webb's thinking was through his involvement in another architectural "school." Although the primary purpose of the organization in question was not primarily to teach young architects a particular view of architecture, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, through the conduct of its meetings, had this effect. At the weekly meetings in London, Lethaby from 1891 was exposed to Webb's ideas on architecture as well as those about life in general.⁴⁰ He learned also from Morris, who, along with Ruskin can be counted as Lethaby's other two most important mentors, and from those Pre-Raphaelites who were members of the organization. It is not clear when Lethaby first personally met Webb and Morris, but leaving aside second-hand familiarity (accomplished through writings, for example) he must have been in contact with them by 1889 when he collaborated with Morris & Co. in the remodeling of Stanmore Hall near

³⁸ Philip Webb, p. 5. Although he stated that it was Webb who had been his prime professional model, Lethaby wrote in other passages of his admiration and regard for Shaw as well.

³⁹ Of course, Webb was the architect most closely associated with Morris, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite group and Lethaby's attitude about architecture can thus be expected to be close to theirs too.

⁴⁰ Lethaby, Ernest Gimson, p. 4. Lethaby joined the SPAB in 1891, introduced by Gimson.

London.⁴¹ Later, Lethaby assumed the leading position in the SPAB and he transmitted the principles laid down by Webb and the others to more recent joiners. Concerning Ruskin, who was surely among his other accomplishments, one of, if not the greatest English commentator on architecture of the nineteenth century, Lethaby wrote that he first became aware of him at the age of fifteen, perhaps in his last year as a full-time resident of Barnstaple. This was about the same time, circa 1877, that Ruskin, Morris and Webb, with Thomas Carlyle, Richard Holman Hunt, Edward Burne-Jones and Charles Faulkner, founded the SPAB.⁴²

One's thinking is very much molded by training and schooling and Lethaby was certainly no exception in this nor that his point of view could be affected by other means as well. These means included Lethaby's participation in a number of organizations besides the architectural offices and the schools where he was taught. Although shy and retiring in personal demeanor, Lethaby was gregarious when it came to joining groups and was even instrumental in starting some that became quite important. His involvement with, for example, the Royal College of Art (R.I.B.A.), the London County Council Central School of Art and Crafts, and his positions as Surveyor to Westminster Abbey and to Rochester

⁴¹ David S. Martin, "The Architecture of W.R Lethaby," Sept. 1957, Manchester University, p. 72. In Godfrey Rubens' "William Lethaby's Buildings" in Service's Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, a caption in fig. 7 (interior view of Stanmore Hall gives the date of Lethaby's involvement as 1889.)

Morris, apparently the generating force in the SPAB, thought of founding such an organization in 1876. But regarding Ruskin, besides the influence on preservation of his earlier writings, like the Seven Lamps of Architecture (1848), and The Stones of Venice (1854), one might mention his suggestion in 1855 to the Society of Antiquaries that a commission for the preservation of antiquities be formed. Morris was complaining the same year about bad restoration procedures in England and France. The main thrust of SPAB activity (the SPAB was also known by the epithet "Anti-Scrape Society") originated in a reaction to the wholesale "restoration" (and destruction) that was being conducted in the name of achieving more "uniform" period-pieces for England's architectural inventory.

⁴² The great Scottish writer Carlyle, had died too early for Lethaby to have been acquainted with him personally through the SPAB. Ruskin was alive but could not have been of influence personally on Lethaby through the SPAB for his last and most debilitating attack of mental illness (beginning two years before Lethaby joined the Society) left him in such a state that he could, for example, write no more than his name.

Cathedral must have brought him a much greater number of contacts (and also more variety in these) than most of his contemporaries concentrating on a private practice.⁴³

It would be impossible to identify or even estimate the number of people who may have influenced Lethaby in the context of their mutual participation in the organizations mentioned and others. This is also true in regard to identifying the sources of those of Lethaby's ideas acquired from literature. However, it might be useful to mention a few more of the personalities who clearly must have crossed Lethaby's path, either in the flesh or through the printed word through contact in organizational activities and individually, and who may have influenced the direction of his thought. In Lethaby's case, even in those instances when he was most clearly functioning in the role of "student" the process of influencing and inspiring was certainly a two-way street. To continue the discussion of Lethaby's contacts one could mention those Lethaby met through the Art Workers Guild. This organization provided an excellent opportunity to fraternize with architects and artists of like mind. In addition to the founding members from Shaw's office already mentioned, people whose span of Guild Membership overlapped Lethaby's, included important artists such as Selwyn Image, Walter Crane, Robert Anning Bell, and William Morris—all four of whom, like Lethaby served at one time as Guild Masters. Architects clearly associated with the arts and crafts who also served as Masters included John D. Sedding, C. Harrison Townsend, E.S. Prior, Halsey Ricardo, Robert Schultz Weir, C.F.A. Voysey and Charles Robert Ashbee. Edwin Lutyens, who made some significant contributions to the Arts and Crafts Movement in the early part of his career, became Master of the Guild in 1933, two years after Lethaby's death, but he certainly knew Lethaby in earlier years as a fellow Guild member.⁴⁴ Other well-known members embracing the Arts and Crafts viewpoint included Leonard Stokes, James MacLaren and MacLaren's fellow Scot, Arthur Heygate

⁴³ Lethaby's involvement with these organizations will be discussed in Chapter XV in the context of discussing Lethaby's views on architectural education.

⁴⁴ Lethaby became Master in 1911 (p. xxvi, Ward, Preface, *Architecture*, 1955 ed.). Such Arts and Crafts associates of Lethaby as Crane, Morris, Sedding, Image, Townsend, Prior and Ricardo preceded him in this post and others, like Schultz, Bell Voysey and Ashbee came after, but before Lethaby's death.

Mackmurdo.⁴⁵ Lethaby's participation in Guild activities also afforded him opportunity to associate with somewhat lesser-known, but not unsuccessful proponents of English Arts and Crafts architecture such as Detmar Blow, Harry Wilson, Cecil Brewer, Ambrose Heal, W.D. Caroe, George Walton, and J.J. Stevenson.

Sedding and Townsend, of course, are not exclusively identified with the Arts and Crafts approach to architecture, although many values were shared. This observation could apply equally to other early Guild members John Francis Bentley (of Westminster Cathedral fame), Ernest Newton (a founder) and Beresford Pite. Shaw himself became a member as did the important art critic, Roger Fry who was in this stage of his career particularly, showing a keen interest in the crafts.⁴⁶ The ideological implications of membership were perhaps less for such other prominent architects such as Basil Champneys and John Belcher. Thomas Graham Jackson, an architect perhaps best known for his writing and teaching, was also a member.

⁴⁵ A few further comments about those mentioned in the two paragraphs above are offered here. It might be added that the sculptor Robert Anning Bell was a frequent collaborator with architects, executing, for example, the large mural on the front of C. Harrison Townsend's Horniman Museum (1896-1901) in London. The famous Scot often linked to the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, Charles Rennie Macintosh, was never a member of the A.W.G. but he often saw the work of its members, particularly on vacations in England in the years of 1894-1898 (cf: David Walker, "Charles Rennie Mackintosh," in Service's Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, p. 225). Thomas Graham Jackson, a pupil, like Street, of Sir George Gilbert Scott was a professor at the Royal Academy and a notable writer on architecture, for example, Reason in Architecture (1906), among other works. Detmar Blow was a close associate of Lethaby as well as of Ernest Gimson and was made a Fellow in the R.I.B.A. He was responsible for such fine architectural works in the Arts and Crafts idiom on his own as Happisburgh Manor, Norfolk (1900) and collaborated with Gimson on others. For example, he carried out masonry walls designed by Gimson for the latter's work at Ulverscroft, Leicestershire (for example, Stoney Well Cottage, 1899, and Lea Cottage, 1900). Cecil Brewer like Blow and Gimson a friend of Lethaby, and a partner with Ambrose Heal, received his most widespread architectural acclaim for his design (with Dunbar Smith) of the Mary Ward Settlement House (1895) in London. He is also associated with the Design and Industries Association, which Lethaby helped bring into existence. (Brewer's partner, Heal, did such work as the office building for Heal and Son, Tottenham Court Road, London (1918), although he devoted much time to furniture design after 1896). Brewer and Heal's works were featured in the influential volumes entitled Small Country House of Today (published c. 1909 and in 1919 and 1925), originally under the editorship of Lawrence Weaver. W.D. Caroe's generally Gothic-appearing structures (he was a pupil of J.L. Pearson) show heavy influence of Arts and Crafts thinking. Leonard Stokes (1858-1925), a more widely-known contemporary of Lethaby in the arts and crafts school had worked for Street, Colcutt (a Street product) and then Bodley.

⁴⁶ Roger Fry, with Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant as nominal co-directors organized the Omega Workshops in July, 1913. Fry supplied most of the capital but George Bernard Shaw and Clive Bell also contributed to the financing. The organization lasted until June 1919 (Nikolaus Pevsner, "The Omega Workshops," Architectural Review, Aug. 1941, Vol. XC, p. 45).

Formed with backing by the Art Workers' Guild was another group in which Lethaby could have met other stimulating practitioners of architecture and allied arts, to their mutual benefit. This was the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, formed three years after the Art Workers' Guild, in 1887. Lethaby was again one of the founders.⁴⁷ The catalog for the Society's Second Exhibition (1889) yields the names of some of the organization's earliest active members. Those with essays published in the catalog, besides Lethaby included Reginald Blomfield, T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, Walter Crane, Thomas Graham Jackson, Ford Maddox-Brown, May Morris, William Morris, E.S. Prior, Halsey Ricardo and Emory Walker.⁴⁸⁵⁰ The catalog also indicates that, in addition to Lethaby's own contributions, there were shown at the exhibition works by designers who were either friends or at least must have been acquaintances of Lethaby. Included were those of C.R. Ashbee, John Belcher, J.F. Bentley, Reginald Blomfield, Edward Burne-Jones, T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, Walter Crane, William de Morgan, Conrad Dressler, Kate Greenaway, Herbert Horne, Selwyn Image, George Jack, James MacLaren, Arthur MacMurdo, May Morris, John Pearson, E.S. Prior, T.M. Rooke, John D. Sedding, Heywood Sumner, F.W. Troup, Frank Verity, and C.F.A. Voysey.⁴⁹

Many of the aforementioned artists and architects who contributed essays and work in conjunction with the exhibition were also listed as members of the society although that status did not seem to be a prerequisite for participation. Others listed as belonging to the society in that year, men who knew Lethaby to varying degrees as well, included the artists William Holman Hunt and Christopher Whall and the architect Mervyn Macartney. By 1893 the Society could add to their rolls the name of Lethaby's friend the distinguished painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema; Lethaby's architect/craftsman colleagues Sidney Barnsley and Ernest Gimson had joined by then also. Three years later, membership lists showed

⁴⁷ The Guild's initial President, Walter Crane, was still in office then. The Society's purpose is aptly suggested in its name.

⁴⁸ Lethaby published two essays in the catalog: "Of Cast Iron" and "Carpenter Furniture."

⁴⁹ Work credited to "Morris & Co." was also shown.

the addition of two more important architects who Lethaby must have known, Edgar Wood (1860-1885, in partnership from c. 1905 with J. Henry Sellars) and the American Bertram Goodhue.⁵⁰

Other Associations—Artistic Collaborations

Links between Lethaby and other participants in the Arts and Crafts movement through collaboration are also important. Lethaby, like the German architect and teacher, the quarter-of-a-century-younger Walter Gropius, was a firm believer in collaboration. For Lethaby, this took the form both of entering into group endeavors and of bringing in well-regarded craftsman to design and produce portions of work on projects for which he had been commissioned himself.

One such instance of such collaboration involving Lethaby concerns the commercially-oriented crafts firm which was organized somewhat along the lines of Morris and Co., although on a much smaller scale. Kenton and Company, as the firm was called Lionel Campourne has told us (named after the street upon which the workshop was located), was founded by Lethaby (shortly after he left Shaw's employ)

⁵⁰ Some additional comments are thought worthwhile with respect to some of the people mentioned. One might be reminded, for one thing, of the connection with the Morris group of Emery Walker (later Sir Emery) and of Heywood Sumner and also of William de Morgan's association with Mackmurdo. Herbert Horne was another important member of the avant-garde in the 1880s. With Mackmurdo he founded the Century Guild and the Guild's pioneering Arts and Crafts magazine, the Hobby Horse. Horne showed book illustrations at the 1892 exhibition of Les Vingt in Brussels—the first time books had been part of that group's exhibitions. Lethaby's friend Christopher Whall is known probably most of all for his work with stained glass while another artist Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), Dutch-born and later knighted in England, is more known today for his realist school oil paintings with classical themes than his interest in the crafts. (Lethaby noted visiting his studio in 1884.) among the more architecturally-oriented, T.M. Rooke had been involved with Shaw's design of Bedford Park and George Jack is perhaps best known as the only architectural practitioner to be trained in Philip Webb's small office. After 1890, Jack concentrated on furniture design for Morris & Co., then teaching. He also wrote about wood carving (cf. the 1903 book of the same title with an introduction by Lethaby). F.W. Troup, who held great admiration for Lethaby, had been an assistant of J. Henry Sellars before the latter's practice in partnership with Edgar Wood. Both Sellars and Wood were keen admirers of Lethaby as well. Like that of a number of the people who have been mentioned, the work of Wood and Troup was published in the Small Country Houses of Today series previously mentioned. The architect Frank Verity provides another example, like Alma-Tadema, of the classicist who was interested in the crafts as well. His practice could be described as faithfully paralleling classical directions on the Continent, unlike the revival work, freely interpreted versions of the English Baroque, practiced by men like Aston Webb and John Belcher. Many of those mentioned in connection with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society pursued work in various media in the arts and in the crafts as well as doing architectural work.

and four others.⁵¹ His partners, all trained, like Lethaby as architects, were the two Barnsley brothers, Mervyn Macartney, and Reginald Blomfield.⁵² The focus of the firm was not architecture however, but the manufacture and sale of furniture. The organization was under-capitalized however and the company was disbanded two years later.⁵³

Lethaby also worked periodically in an auxiliary capacity on the architectural projects of others, although the number of these instances was not large. Examples of this kind of involvement include Lethaby's design of a panel for the altarpiece of E.S. Prior's church at Bothenhampton, Dorset (exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, exhibit of 1889) and his work (already mentioned) with Morris & Co. at Stanmore Hall.⁵⁴ Also, after leaving Shaw's office in 1890, Lethaby designed a font for an earlier Shaw project at Low Bentham, Lancaster and in a more extensive involvement two years later, Lethaby oversaw the completion of the Church of St. Swithins, Hither Green (near London) which Ernest Newton began but was unable to continue due to a serious, but temporary illness.⁵⁵ Also, Lethaby designed fireplaces and grates for Smith and Brewer's Passmore Edwards Settlement Estate (Mary Ward House, 1895), Bloomsbury.

In Lethaby's own built works, he was able to enjoy the collaboration of fellow architects and craftsmen, virtually all people in the Arts and Crafts movement or having some sympathy with it. One such was Ernest Gimson, who handled the plaster work at Lethaby's manor house at Avon Tyrell (1891-

⁵¹ Explanation for firm name given by Lionel Lambourne in Utopian Craftsmen, Pereanne Smith Inc., Salt Lake City, 1980, p. 166.

⁵² The number of connections between Blomfield and Lethaby before the turn of the century is interesting considering that their positions on architecture on many points had become diametrically opposed by the time of Lethaby's death. See Chapter XV on Education for more discussion of this.

⁵³ Lethaby continued his own architectural practice during these years.

⁵⁴ Lethaby's contribution at Stanmore Hall seems to be the design of some or all of the wall paneling, fireplaces and staircases, and some furniture as well. Rubens, in the photo caption on p. 135 of his piece in Service's Edwardian Architecture and its Origins seems to say that all of the paneling and staircases were designed by Lethaby. Prior's work at Bothenhampton was Holy Trinity Church (1887-1889). The following year, also through Prior's recommendation, Lethaby designed the Memorial window for a church at Symondsburys (near Bridport).

⁵⁵ Shaw, probably with Lethaby's help, had designed the rectory at Low Bentham in 1886-87. Newton passed on a number of other small "craft" commissions to Lethaby in the mid and late 1890s. This included commissions to design furniture, fireplace equipment, pottery, woodwork and leadwork.

1892) and contributed again in Lethaby's Melsetter House in the Orkneys (1898). Philip Webb's associate, George Jack, was also involved in this last named. Lethaby's only commercial project, the Eagle Insurance Building in Birmingham (begun 1898-finished 1900) was done in collaboration with the Birmingham architect, Joseph Lancaster Ball.⁵⁶ At Lethaby's All Saints Church (1900-1902) at Brockhampton in Herefordshire collaborators of note include Christopher Whall who was responsible for the stained glass in the principal west-end location there (and some other locations) and Stirling Lee, who carved the reredos. A small altar triptych which drew on designs of the late Edward Burne-Jones was provided by Morris & Co. and Lethaby obtained the services of the architect Randall Wells to supervise the construction work.⁵⁷

Lethaby's executed relatively little, as an independent architect after about 1902 but in two late projects—the remodeling of an 1880 Gothic Revival church (St. Paul's) at Four Elms in Kent in 1915, and similar work for St. Margaret's Church, Rochester, Kent (intermittently from 1918 to 1921)—he again pursued the collaborative course—drawing on the areas of expertise of his friends.⁵⁸ At Four Elms, Lethaby worked with George Jack and Stirling Lee, at Rochester with Jack again.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ball, a Birmingham architect, was later director of the Birmingham School of Architecture (1909-1916). His early work, such as Ashbury Methodist Chapel (1885), Holyhead Road, Birmingham, shows an Arts and Crafts approach. There are also later buildings like St. Gregory's Church (1902-1928), Small Heath, or Winterbourne (1903), Edgbaston which especially show an affinity to Lethaby's values. Ball was also at one time President of the Birmingham Architectural Association.

⁵⁷ Morris, like Ruskin, was recently deceased by this time. The same year Lethaby's church was complete, Wells built a church, St. Edward the Confessor, on his own only a few miles away at Kempley, with furnishings by Gimson and Barnsley. This design, employing elements of medieval architectural vocabulary as conditioned by Arts and Crafts taste, is similar to Lethaby's church. Wells' later career later included a partnership with E.S. Prior. They were also both involved with Roker Chapel (1906), Sunderland, with George Jack also participating

⁵⁸ Lethaby retired from practice in 1903, possibly because of the pressure of other commitments. At that time he had two additional major positions, Principal of the L.C.C. Central School and Professor of Design at the R.C.A. In addition he had recently undertaken marital obligations (his wife was the American, Edith Crosby of Boston, whom he had met nine years earlier on his travels to Constantinople). Another contributing factor to his retirement from practice may have been his recent experience with his church at Brockhampton. Lethaby was known to worry excessively about his works under construction, as during the foundation settlement problem that occurred during the building of the Brockhampton structure.

⁵⁹ In 1892, Lethaby also recommended Whall to do some new stained glass work that was contemplated for the Cathedral at Rochester. At Four Elms, Lethaby designed the reredos (which were executed by Lee), the choir stalls, the chancel screen, the organ chancel and the lectern.

There were also, for Lethaby, collaborations with others, again mainly those involved with the Arts and Crafts, on architectural designs which did not result in built works. One such undertaking while still in Shaw's office (1882) was the competition design he produced, working with Macartney, for St. Anne's Schools, Streatham.⁶⁰ Even later in the decade, beginning in 1899, Lethaby participated in a collaborative enterprise with F.W. Troup to provide a design for workers' housing flats in the Chelsea area of London. Another episode indicates the existence of an interesting contact between Lethaby and the famous Scottish planner Sir Patrick Geddes. Geddes apparently had been responsible for involving Lethaby and another Arts and Crafts architect, F.W. Troup, in a project to provide workers' housing in the Chelsea area of London.⁶¹ The flats were to be similar in design approach to some previous hostels for students in Edinburgh. This effort, begun in 1899, was never brought to completion, however, even to the point of fully developing the plans. In 1902, Lethaby collaborated on an entry in the Liverpool Cathedral Competition (eventually won by Giles Gilbert Scott (1880-1960), a grandson of the architect George Gilbert Scott (1811-1875). Involved with this unsuccessful but interesting Byzantine-Revival competition design, Lethaby's collaborators were architects Halsey Ricardo, Henry (Harry) Wilson, F.W. Troup and Robert Schultz (Weir), along with the artists Stirling Lee and Christopher Whall. The next year Lethaby, as mentioned in the Introduction, collaborated with Ricardo again in an unsuccessful attempt to design, at Letchworth, the first Garden City.

Still another form of collaboration involved Lethaby's drawing skills. On several occasions he provided book illustrations for architects and others in the arts who were involved in writing efforts. In 1889, for example, he worked on illustrations for Sedding's book (unpublished) on Saxon and Norman architecture and the same year provided illustrations for his friend, Emory Walker who was in the engraving and drafting business with another of Lethaby's friends, Sidney Cockerell (1867-1961). Also,

⁶⁰ The entry was not placed. Martin in his thesis said that Newton was also involved in this.

⁶¹ Martin, Thesis, "The Architecture of W.R. Lethaby," pp. 91-92.

Lethaby provided, in 1903, the frontispiece for a posthumous edition of Sedding's book, Garden Craft Old and New.⁶²

Miscellaneous Connections

A few of Lethaby's other contacts and influences are worth noting in more fully characterizing the quality and diversity of the milieu in which he functioned. The names of two more of Lethaby's associated emerge in examining his application, tendered unsuccessfully in 1910, for the Slade Professorship at Oxford. Besides Morris' close associate, Walter Crane, the document lists Lethaby's sponsors as being William Richmond, R.A., and the dean of Westminster, who no doubt knew Lethaby in his capacity as Surveyor to the Abbey. Other names not previously mentioned appear in connection with a 1922 (sixty-fifth) birthday celebration for Lethaby. The participants at the event, joining the following people among the participants: Arthur and Sidney Barnsley, Beresford Pite, Reginald Blomfield, E.S. Prior, Halsey Ricardo, Noel Rooke, Sidney Cockerell, Robert Schultz (Weir), were the artist Robert Anning Bell, Herbert Read, Douglas Cockerell (of renown in the printing arts), J.A. Gotch (known perhaps today mainly for his work as an architectural historian), J.W. Mackail (at one time one of Morris' draftsmen), Morris' daughter, May Morris, and perhaps most interestingly, George Bernard Shaw.⁶³

In connection with the latter, it can be said that Lethaby and G.B. Shaw knew each other fairly well and their paths crossed on various occasions. As a member of the Fabian Society Lethaby took an active part in the Society's meetings, frequently finding himself debating Shaw on various points, although this activity apparently did not rupture in their friendship. After Lethaby's friend Sydney Cockerell took over

⁶² Lethaby's skills as an illustrator were considerable. Many of his own publications are illustrated, but it is difficult to attribute all of the illustrations to his own hand. There are definitely instances of outside help, even in the early works, as in his book of 1892, Architecture Mysticism and Myth. (In the aforementioned book Lethaby thanked one of the Barnsley brothers and also Ernest Gimson for their graphic contributions.) Lethaby's water colors are kept under curatorial care in various locations. A number can be found at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the R.I.B.A. Drawing Collection. The Tate Gallery, the National Gallery and the Huddersfield Gallery also retain some of these water colors. Periodic displays of this material has occurred.

⁶³ For Gotch's writing in architectural history, see, for example, his Inigo Jones, (1928). Noel Rooke provided book illustrations for Douglas Cockerell. His relationship to T.M. Rooke, previously mentioned, is not known to this author.

the directorship of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, Lethaby was among the guests Cockerell entertained as was G.B. Shedd (the Impressionist painter), Walter Sickert, Roger Fry, Rudyard Kipling, and W.B. Yeats. Lethaby could have met these interesting people as Cockerell's guests and even another important one, Bertrand Russell. Lethaby's friend E.S. Prior was at Cambridge then, too, as Slade Professor.⁶⁴

Through his activities having to do with opposing the Architectural Registration Act of 1890, Lethaby may have gotten to know another important architect who shared his anti-registration sentiments—John Brydon. John Brydon, a fellow Scot like Norman Shaw who acted as chief assistant to Eden Nesfield and Shaw during their partnership and later under Shaw alone, left the latter's employ before Lethaby entered it.⁶⁵ Brydon's successful pursuit of the Neo-Baroque idiom (for example, the Town Hall in Bath, 1896) must have provided an ample basis for a difference of opinion with Lethaby, who also knew him in other contexts than that associated with their opposition to the 1890 Act.

Through other activities Lethaby came in contact with more prominent individuals in a number of fields. In addition to those he may have known personally, there are those that Lethaby at least knew through their written works, as indicated by his references to them in his published works, letters and the textual entries in his sketch books.

Lethaby mentioned many of the people already noted in this chapter in his voluminous writings, sometimes referring to their words or deeds to reinforce a point. The following chapters will include some information as related to specific topics about other links (either personal or through the written word) between Lethaby and other practitioners, theorists, critics and historians of the visual arts. One might close the discussion of Lethaby's connections by taking a note of a few people known for their work in fields less related to architecture, from whose written works Lethaby drew inspiration or who inspired his disagreement.

⁶⁴ Roger Fry (1866-1934) was Slade Professor at Cambridge from 1933.

⁶⁵ Brydon later began in practice on his own, one which became very successful.

Beginning with the oldest discipline, philosophy, one can note that Lethaby's writing indicates his acquaintance with such thinkers from the past as Aristotle, Plato and St. Ambrose.⁶⁶ From his own time, Lethaby seems to have had particular regard for the ideas of Bertrand Russell and the Americans George Santayana and John Dewey.

A larger number of references in Lethaby's work are to literary figures with those from the British Isles, not surprisingly, being the most frequently mentioned. Of those from his own country, Lethaby went back at least to the fourteenth century, mentioning Chaucer and the later poets, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope and Blake. Poets alive in Lethaby's time, besides Yeats (already mentioned) also appear in Lethaby's writings—Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Browning and Tennyson, for example. Among those writing prose primarily or occupied as playwrights, in addition to G.B. Shaw, one can find mention of Dickens, Conrad, Kipling, and H.G. Wells. American writers, too, are well represented, including R.W. Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William James and Walt Whitman. One can also find Lethaby's references to French literary figures, most notably, Victor Hugo, and to Tolstoy among the Russians.

Politicians appear less frequently in Lethaby's writings, but, perhaps related to his socialist leanings, Trotsky and Lenin are mentioned. The Indian, M. Gandhi, is also. Lethaby also mentioned prominent British politicians Stanley Baldwin and Ramsey MacDonald in his letters of the 1920s and 1930s. Economists (Adam Smith), naturalists (Charles Darwin) and composers (Richard Wagner) also appear.

Travels

Lethaby's views on architecture were formed not only through his personal contacts, training, education and readings, but also through his travels in the British Isles and abroad. In Britain, the pursuit of his architectural work alone took him in many directions. Although there were not many of them,

⁶⁶ Of more general Classic authors, Pliny is also mentioned. From ancient times, also, from another discipline, the geographer Pausanius is mentioned as well.

Lethaby's own architectural commissions were far flung—compare the location of the residential works Avon Tyrell (1891-92) and High Coxlease (1901) in the New Forest southwest of Southampton to his Eagle Insurance Building and “The Hurst” (1893), a residence in Sutton Coldfield (a suburb of Birmingham) and to Melsetter House on the Island of Hoy, off the northernmost tip of “mainland” Scotland. His work took him to the west of England, within twenty miles of the Welsh border where he built All Saints Church at Brockhampton, as well as to the east for his work on St. Margaret, Rochester, forty miles from Dover. His interest in old buildings (especially medieval ones) and their preservation must have taken him to many English localities and to Scotland, Wales and Ireland as well. Contacts with others and with the architecture and other stimuli in these places must have had their impact on him. The reciprocal must also have been true.

As an educator and author of considerable renown Lethaby travelled to speak in many localities.⁶⁷ In these places, Lethaby was, of course, influenced by those he met and what he saw as well as his affecting (or at least trying to affect) the opinions of others and conditions that he thought needed remedying. His international travels seem to have been confined almost exclusively to the European continent—he never seems to have visited the United States, or, in fact, any part of the Western Hemisphere. This is true of Africa and Asia, as well.⁶⁸ Medieval subject matter provided a major motivating influence for Lethaby's journeys. In a comment from 1925 related to this, Lethaby suggested the extent of his travels in Europe: “I have worked measuring and drawing at all the great monuments of Northern Gothic art, and some of them again and again...”⁶⁹ While the foregoing indicates a concentration on visiting the works of Northern Europe, Italy, at least, among the southern countries, seem to have been well covered also.

⁶⁷ Two instances outside London include addresses delivered to the Birmingham Municipal School of Arts and Crafts in 1901 and an address given in Newcastle-on-Tyne in the late teens or in the 1920s.

⁶⁸ Based on examination of his published writings, manuscript notes at Barnstaple, sketchbooks at the R.I.B.A. and letters now kept in several places in London.

⁶⁹ Alfred Powell, Scripts and Scraps, 1956, Earl and Ludlow, Cirencester (privately printed), pp. 13-14.

It is difficult to ascertain when Lethaby was first exposed in person to the architectural works of Continental Europe. His sketch books at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection provide an indication of what may be one of the earliest instances, for in the sketches from 1879 (Lethaby would have been twenty-two at the time) there appear sketches of French medieval art. Perhaps his winning of the Soane Medallion that year (or late 1878) provided the first effective stimulus (and monetary enablement) for foreign travel.⁷⁰

France was one of Lethaby's favorite countries to visit, one can tell from other sketchbooks. Entries from 1880 indicate that he visited France by August of that year (Normandy) and those from the following year seem to show that he was in Paris, Amiens, Orleans, and the Loire Valley then. The books for the years 1887 and 1889 contain datelines from Burgundy. Travels to Europe in 1884, 1890 and 1893 may have also included traveling in France, for the areas he mentioned in the sketchbooks, although not in France, would be most easily reached via that country. After the turn of the century, notations in Lethaby's sketchbooks indicate travels to France in 1903 through 1905 and in 1908 and 1909. From these sketchbook sources one can learn that the 1904 visit to France included visits to Sens and Dijon and the one in 1908 indicates Paris and Bourges. In the following year the sketchbooks indicate that Lethaby was in Paris, Sens (again), Liseux and Senlis. In addition to the places already named, Lethaby, in a 1925 article⁷¹ specifically mentioned having been in Abbeville, Angers, Autun, Auxerre, Bayeaux, Beauvais, Chalons-sur-Marne, Chartres, Clermond-Ferrand, Coutances, Laon, Langres, LeMans, Lyons, Meaux, Nantes, Nevers, Noyon, Poitiers, Reims, Rouen, St. Omer, St. Quentin, Senlis, Soison, Tours, Troyes and Vézelay. It is also known that he visited Chamonix, near Mt. Blanc.

By 1884, at least, Lethaby had visited Italy, when he was in Piacenza, in the Po Valley, and by 1905, Rome, where he returned the following year in a journey that took him to Turin, Genoa, Orvieto,

⁷⁰ He won the Pugin Competition not long after, in 1882.

⁷¹ Powell, Scripts and Scraps, 1956, p. 14.

Perugia, Assisi, Milan and Florence. Lethaby's travel-related drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum also indicate that there were visits in Italy to Como, Padua, Venice, Verona, and Siena.

Voyages in the Mediterranean basin took him also to Nicosia, Cyprus (by 1884) where Lethaby sketched Byzantine and Gothic works.⁷² Italian travels took Lethaby also to Palermo, Sicily.

There is not much evidence of Lethaby's travels in Eastern Europe. He made reference in his sketchbook of 1890 to being near Nisch (Nis) in southern Serbia near the Bulgarian border. He also mentioned being in Budapest.⁷³ Lethaby traveled to Istanbul (Constantinople) in 1893, where he first met his future wife and made the studies that led the following year to his collaborative publication, with Harold Swainson, on the Church of the Hagia Sophia. He returned there again, at least once, in 1904.

Lethaby was in Switzerland by 1901 when he visited Geneva, Berne and Zurich. He visited Lausanne in 1904 and Basle in 1907. He was on the Swiss side of Lake Constance in 1909, also visiting Schaffhausen then. He was in Tournai, Belgium also in 1909.

Lethaby's visits to Germany include several places that have changed hands between that country and France. In 1901, he was in Strassbourg, Alsace, and at some unknown time, in Metz, in Lorraine (both now in France). By 1909 he had been to Munich. A visit to Berlin (the date not given) is also mentioned by Lethaby as one of the "half-dozen" times he said he had visited Germany.⁷⁴ Lethaby had visited, by 1915, he related then, "many of the most important Germany cities."⁷⁵

The primary incentive for visiting most of these countries seems to have been the older architectural works although Lethaby praised contemporary French and Swiss engineering constructions enough to suggest he might have been interested in seeing works of this type firsthand as well. The places visited, the contents of his sketchbooks (or other knowledge of his specific historical interests) make it fairly clear

⁷² Nicosia seems to be the easternmost location of Lethaby's travels.

⁷³ This was part of Austria then.

⁷⁴ "Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn From It," Address to the Architectural Association, Jan. 1915, as reprinted in *Form in Civilization*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1922, p. 97.

⁷⁵ "Modern German Architecture...", p. 97.

that medieval architecture and art was the primary focus of Lethaby's international travels (and the domestic ones also, for that matter). The classical tradition as expressed in Renaissance, Baroque, and Neo-Classical works, as well as in ancient ones must have also made its impact on Lethaby, however—especially during his Italian visits. Some of the German visits were definitely motivated by interest in contemporary events. Such was the case with Lethaby's associates also. In one such by Harry Peach, in frequent touch with Lethaby at the time, Peach reported visiting Germany (with two other men close to Lethaby's way of thinking, Cecil Brewer and Ambrose Heal, just before WWI) to see the Werkbund Exhibition and also a work by Alfred Messel (1853-1909) in Darmstadt and some "new factory architecture."⁷⁶ It is entirely possible, of course, that Lethaby visited Europe almost every year beginning in his early thirties and continuing at least into his late fifties.

The Dissemination of Lethaby's Thoughts—Lecturing and Teaching

Something should be said about how Lethaby's own ideas were disseminated. The principal means of his doing so are as follows: 1) oral expression of his thoughts in public fora (both as part of teaching-related activities and in the context of other occasions), 2) publication of Lethaby's writings, and 3) the publication of his designs, built and unbuilt, which of course conveyed Lethaby's ideas by example.

Lethaby's teaching fora included as has been mentioned, his employment at the London County Council School of Arts and Crafts in whose activities he had been involved since 1892 and where he had served as principal from 1896 until his resignation in 1911, and at the Royal College of Art, where he

⁷⁶ TS at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection entitled "A Short Address Given at the Architect's Guild Memorial Evening," April 28, 1932," also entitled "W.R. Lethaby," p. 3. Messel had been one of the most dominant architectural personalities in Berlin. His high reputation was based on such progressive works as the Wertheim Department Store (1896-99, now destroyed) which employed large expanses of glass held in place by exposed metal. For a time Messel also was the A.E.G.'s (Allgemeine Electricitäts-Gesellschaft) principal architect. (Peter Behrens succeeded him in this post upon Messel's death).

served as Professor of Design from 1900 until 1918.⁷⁷ The Art Workers' Guild, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings provided other opportunities for him to advance his views. This was also true in the case of the Society of Antiquarians, an organization in which he was made a Fellow in 1910. He was a leader, as well, of a very important predecessor (and parent organization) of the Art Workers' Guild, the St. George's Art Society.⁷⁸ His architectural services as Surveyor to Westminster Abbey (1906-1928) and Surveyor to Rochester Cathedral (1920-1927) no doubt expanded his contacts in church circles and this afforded him still other opportunities to express his views. Lethaby had his disagreements with the Royal Institute of British Architects, but as a member (and a Fellow from 1906) he took an active part in its activities.⁷⁹ He had been scheduled as a speaker on an R.I.B.A. program at least by 1901. By 1902 he had delivered a talk to another organization of the architectural profession—the Architectural Association.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Lethaby was appointed art advisor to the Technical Education Board of the L.C.C. in 1892 Martin reports in his thesis (see his Chronological Index). In 1894, Lionel Lambourne tells us in *Utopian Craftsmen*, op.cit., p. 94, that Lethaby applied to the London County government for the post of Inspector of Art Schools. Lethaby and George Frampton, the sculptor, were appointed co-principals of the new London Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1896, although Lethaby was in sole charge for all practical purposes (as per A.R.N. Roberts, "Lethaby as Teacher and Friend," part of "William Richard Lethaby – 1857-1931, A Symposium in Honour of his Centenary," *R.I.B.A.J.*, April 1957, 3rd Series, Vol. 64, No. 6, p. 224.) Lethaby's friend, Christopher Whall was on the faculty there too, by 1896, and George Jack also taught there. Douglas Cockerell, of book-binding fame, and Noel Rooke, illustrator, also taught there. Lethaby's friend, Halsey Ricardo, was the school's instructor for architecture. When Lethaby resigned, Fred V. Burridge, who had headed a school in Liverpool took over. Lethaby also brought Ernest Jackson, an expert in lithography, to the L.C.C. Central School. Jackson was later made Principal.

Lethaby was the R.C.A.'s first Professor of Design; there was another teaching position for the teaching of architecture as distinguished from "design." (Roberts, in his 1957 contribution "Lethaby as Teacher and Friend" already cited, said he began in 1901.) He was succeeded as Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art by his former pupil E.W. Tristram, who held the post until 1948. The basic tripartite division of the school (Architecture, Painting, Sculpture) lasted from 1901 until Tristram left. Two of Lethaby's arts and crafts friends, Beresford Pite and Henry Wilson worked with Lethaby (the period of common tenure not known to this author), Pite as the school's Professor of Architecture. Lecturing experiences at older institutions include his summer lectures at Cambridge in 1920 and 1922 and, in 1926, at Oxford for the 11th annual Conference on Industrial Welfare (Bailliol College).

⁷⁸ This group, which Lethaby helped found in early 1883 last only about a year. Its membership combined with that of another arts and crafts oriented group called "The Fifteen" to form the Arts Workers' Guild.

⁷⁹ His part in the R.I.B.A.'s policies on architectural education are particularly noteworthy and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter XV.

⁸⁰ His addresses sponsored by the R.I.B.A. and the AA were probably numerous.

Among Lethaby's later activities in which he made his views known was his participation in the Design and Industries Association, an organization which he helped found in 1915 and one which sought to acknowledge the realities of the Machine Age more than some others, like the Arts Workers' Guild that he had joined earlier.⁸¹ Lethaby also must have made himself heard as a member (also serving as a Governor) of the British Institute of Industrial Art and in the context of his attendance at conferences on industrial welfare. There were many other speaking opportunities as well.⁸²

Publication of Lethaby's Writings

Lethaby was quite successful at getting his views into print as well as articulating them verbally and often a wide readership was reached. Considering the time needed for his many other activities the number of books he produced is surprising. Beginning with Architecture, Mysticism and Myth in 1891, he followed soon after with his "materials" study Leadwork (1893) and his collaborative work on the Hagia Sophia (1894). He continued to concentrate on the direction suggested by his work on the Hagia Sophia, that is, dealing with historical subjects with his London Before the Conquest of 1902. From that point Lethaby published better than one book every two years for the next decade: 1904: Medieval Art; 1906: Westminster Abbey and the Kings Craftsmen; 1908: Greek Building; 1910: The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (in collaboration with William Harvey and others); 1912: London and Westminster Painters of the Middle Ages; and in 1913, The Romance Tiles of Chertsey Abbey. In a number of these books Lethaby not only addressed a historical subject but also included comments linking the subject matter to current architectural concerns. The most important exposition of Lethaby's view on architecture, in book form, Architecture (first published in 1911) is a good example of just such a combination.

⁸¹ In 1915, Lethaby wrote Design and Industry, A Proposal for the Forming of a Design and Industries Association, a proposal for the founding of the organization.

⁸² Before his fellow Fabians, as noted earlier, Lethaby also articulated his views. He may have been a member of the Civic Art Association also. His "Towns to Live In" article of 1918 was reprinted under this organization's auspices. Lethaby's associates Halsey Ricardo and Beresford Pite also had pamphlets published by the Civic Arts Association. For example, in 1901 Lethaby spoke on two occasions to the Birmingham Municipal School of Art and in 1906, he spoke before the International Congress of Architects.

A little more than a decade passed since the first appearance of Architecture before a volume offering a collection of Lethaby's more important articles, Form in Civilization (1922) appeared. This work and Architecture are Lethaby's most widely-read volumes. A volume of very limited circulation, on the other hand, but of great interest to the student of the Arts and Crafts at any rate, was a still later work of Lethaby's, Ernest Gimson, His Life and Work (1924) produced in collaboration with Alfred Powell and F.L. Griggs. But there is also a more widely read biographical effort by Lethaby, that of his friend Philip Webb. The book, Philip Webb, published posthumously (1935), was essentially a republication of Lethaby's articles on Webb appearing in The Builder in 1925. In the 1920s, Lethaby continued his historically-oriented publications with Londinium: Architecture and the Crafts (1923), Antique London (1924), Westminster Abbey Re-Examined (1925), and Medieval Paintings (1928).

Lethaby's thoughts had appeared in print in shorter pieces almost a decade earlier than his first book. Earliest of the articles appears to have been one published in The Architect in 1883, the same year that a talk he gave before the St. George Art Society appeared in print.⁸³ Lethaby published voluminously in a wide variety of periodicals. Before the turn of the twentieth century, there appeared articles in the Architectural Association Journal and in the Association's Notes (by 1889 in both cases), the Journal of the Society for Arts (by 1890), Studio (by 1890) and the Architectural Review (by 1898, two years after it had begun publishing). Many contributions followed in the latter publication throughout his life.

The year 1900 marked the first of his contributions to periodicals in the twentieth century and in The Builder. In The Builder, Lethaby's writings appeared for a number of years with monthly or greater frequency, continuing to the year of his death. His published writings in another important periodical for the architectural profession in England, the Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects began about the same time (1902) and continued over a similar timespan. There were also, occasionally, contributions to The British Architect, The Architect and Contract Report and the Building News among the other architecturally-oriented periodicals, and to the Arts and Crafts Quarterly and the Design and

⁸³ Nothing further has been learned by this author about these early writings.

Industries Journal, among the periodicals with wider scope.⁸⁴ Lethaby published in the highly regarded art journal, Burlington Magazine, as well as in prominent archaeological journals such as the Journal of Hellenic Studies and the Archaeological Journal. The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquarians also published his contributions and at least two of the SPAB's Annual Reports contained them also.⁸⁵ Some of the other periodicals in which Lethaby's writing appeared follow: Anglo-Italian Review, Athenaeum, Country Life, The Hibbert Journal, Imprint, The London Mercury, The Observer, Parents' Review, The Proceedings of the British Academy, The Saturday Review, Teachers World and The Times (London). These suggest the many ways in which an English reader in the early years of the past century might have been exposed to Lethaby's thinking.

Besides periodicals and books, some of the expression of Lethaby's thought through the printed word came in the form of pamphlets. The Birmingham Municipal School of Arts and Crafts published his essay "Morris as Workmaster" in this form in 1901 and at least one pamphlet authored by Lethaby was printed by the Design and Industries Association. Dryad Handicrafts, an organization based in Leicester, published three of Lethaby's pamphlets in the 1920s: House Painting (1920), Simple Furniture (1922), and Designing Games (1929).

Lethaby's writings were also included in various anthologies and other works of more than one author. Many of the most interesting of these, from the standpoint of Lethaby making known his views on architecture and the crafts were published before the turn of the twentieth century. He contributed to the collections of essays in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society catalogs of 1889 and 1890 and, in 1892, to the collection of essays compiled under the editorship of Norman Shaw and Thomas Graham Jackson, Architecture: A Profession or an Art.⁸⁶ In 1892 also appeared an article by Lethaby on furniture in the publication Plain Handicrafts. Another interesting anthology from 1897, entitled Art and Life, and the

⁸⁴ Also, Lethaby's writings can be found in the periodicals Art, Handicraft and Education and Home and Country Arts.

⁸⁵ See Bibliography.

⁸⁶ The first such catalog essay was apparently the 1889 one, "Of Cast Iron."

Building and Decorating of Cities, contains Lethaby's essay, "Of Beautiful Cities." A later essay oriented toward urbanism, "The Town Itself," was included in Town Theory and Practice (1921, C.B. Purdom, editor).⁸⁷ Lethaby's writing on historical topics included the chapter on medieval architecture he wrote for E.G. Crump's, The Legacy of the Middle Ages (1926). The same year he contributed an essay to a volume produced by the Boy Scouts, the Book of the Quest.⁸⁸

Lethaby's articles are also found in such reference-oriented publications as Plommer's (Simpson's) History of Architecture, 1908 edition, and he wrote four entries for the eleventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (1911). Even the 1927 Blue Guide to London and Environs contained Lethaby's prose.

Lethaby also wrote quite a few prefaces and introductions for various works, some of which contain interesting comments that shed light on his theory. He wrote the introduction for a number of books in the Artistic Crafts Series for which he was editor—books whose authors often were closely connected to Lethaby. Several in the series were published by 1905—Stained Glass by Christopher Whall, Bookbinding by Douglas Cockerell, Cabinet Making and Design by Charles Spooner, Silverwork and Jewelry by Henry Wilson, Embroidery and Tapestry by Grace Christie and Woodcarving by George Jack. Later ones in the series included Dress Design by Talbot Hughes (1913), and Hand Loom Weaving by Luther Hooper (1913). The writing of other introductions also provided opportunities for Lethaby to inject some of his own views, including the one for Winefride de L'Hôpital's work on J.F. Bentley's (de l'Hôpital's father's) Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster, Westminster Cathedral and Its Architecture, published in 1919. Also there was the one in a pamphlet arguing for the preservation of Whitgift Foundling Hospital (1926) and the one for a catalog of the 1921 Exhibition of the Red Rose Guild in Manchester.

⁸⁷ The book also contained essays by others with links to the Arts and Crafts and who also knew Lethaby—Raymond Unwin and Edwin Lutyens.

⁸⁸ Other collections to which Lethaby contributed include the Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Architecture (1905) and the Report of the Seventh Annual Lecture Conference on Industrial Welfare (1926).

It is not possible here to offer much information on the publication or reprinting of Lethaby's writings in foreign publications.⁸⁹ One might mention as one example of this type of activity his introduction (in French) to Paul Biver's L'Eglise Abbatial Westminster (1913) and the translation of two of his essays into German by Peter Bruckmann in 1916. There has not been an attempt made as part of this study to discuss the various reviews of his published undertakings or the paraphrasings of his lectures which appeared from time to time in newspapers and magazines, except where Lethaby's original words were unavailable.

Publication of Graphics (Except Lethaby's Built Works)

Lethaby's point of view was made known most effectively through the spoken and written word but communication was also accomplished through the publication of his graphic efforts, through published photographs of his designs and his editorial actions concerning the publication of graphic material of others.

Before the turn of the twentieth century, with the exception of a few magazine illustrations of some of his furniture, Lethaby's contribution via the publication of visual material came mainly in the form of: a) illustrations he did relating to the architectural projects of others, b) designs he submitted in competitions for buildings and other works which were only intended to be solutions to contest problems, and c) selections for publication of illustrations of the work of others made in his various activities as an editor.

Lethaby's influence on architectural design through the avenues mentioned in the preceding paragraph probably could not have been too great. After 1900 however, especially in the first decade after, one might be tempted to attribute a bit more influence to Lethaby via this publication of visual material, one reason being that his own architectural works were published both in England and in Germany.

⁸⁹ A little more will be said on this in the course of the discussion taking place in Chapter XIV.

The earliest instances of Lethaby's graphical efforts finding their way into the press are the illustrations he drew and the designs he produced for his architectural employers and also the solutions he submitted to architectural magazine design competitions. Lethaby was barely nineteen (1876) when his perspective view of one of Alexander Lauder's chapels was published in The Architect. Many of his drawings for Norman Shaw's projects also found their way into the trade journals of the times. Some problems exist in ascertaining for sure how many illustrations and drawings of Shaw's works were Lethaby's just as the extent of Lethaby's contribution on one Shaw project or another is difficult to know with precision. However, of the drawings of Shaw's work that were published, an early example of one definitely done by Lethaby (it was signed by him) is the perspective of Albert Hall Mansions which appeared in The Builder in 1879. A slightly later one (1882) in the same periodical is the perspective view of the St. James Branch (London) of the Alliance Assurance Company—also a drawing signed by Lethaby. Lethaby also did the perspective of Shaw's church, St. Michael and All Angels (1878-1879, Bedford Park) which appeared in the Building News in 1879.⁹⁰

Illustrations (drawings and photographs) of many of the commissions that Lethaby was very likely involved with at Shaw's, whether or not all the drawings involved were done by Lethaby, were published in the trade journals. One such was Shaw's commission (1878-1880) for stores, a house and inn in Hounslow for which illustrations were provided Building News of 1880 and another was Shaw's Flete House (1878-82), Devon appearing in the British Architect of 1890 (and later, in Country Life in 1915).⁹¹ Other projects in which Lethaby likely was involved which received graphic coverage in the architectural press include Shaw's manor house "Dawpool" (c. 1882-84) and #42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead

⁹⁰ A view of Shaw's Holy Trinity Church, Latimer Road, London (c. 1885-87) appearing much later in P. Howell's Victorian Churches (1968) was probably done by Lethaby to whom the church's design owes a great deal. Drawings by Lethaby for another of Shaw's works #42 Netherhall Gardens, London, appeared in the R.I.B.A.J. of 1888. This study will, however, not attempt generally to mention Lethaby's illustrations and photographs of his work appearing in later publications (from the 1960s, '70s and '80s). This would include illustrations in later re-issues of his books, books about the Arts and Crafts, or about Lethaby's most well-known architectural employer, Norman Shaw.

⁹¹ Helping to establish this connection, four of the contract drawings for this latter project are usually attributed to Lethaby.

(1887). Illustrations for the latter appeared, for example, in the Architect in 1890 and the former in the same publication in 1888, as well as in Country Life in 1913.

Lethaby's published competition entries of 1877, 1878 and 1879 for the Building News' Designing Club competition has been mentioned earlier. In his earlier days also, Lethaby submitted material on historical themes to magazines. In February of 1879, for example, the Building News published his drawing of a Jacobean house in Derby and a drawing by him of a medieval architectural subject was carried in the same journal in 1882.

Another early major activity relating to the publishing of Lethaby's graphic works was his involvement with the Architectural Illustration Society. This group, founded by Lethaby and some of his friends and active from 1886 until 1902, had as its principal occupation the publication of selected architectural illustrations in a weekly architectural journal.

Among the more than five hundred illustrations published through the society's efforts several genres can be noticed. Historical subjects were included as well as contemporary ones. Among the latter were some in the academic (classicizing) spirit but a list of those most favored by the Society in selecting works for publication shows that the emphasis was on contemporary work displaying a "vernacular" approach which drew in form, or at least in spirit, from medieval work. Many of the contemporary architects whose work was chosen for illustration show evidence through these of the Arts and Crafts approach Lethaby admired. Others, though more historicizing in approach (for the most part tied to the Gothic Revival or in a classicizing spirit) Lethaby held in regard for what he considered to be their honest use of materials or commitment to sound, careful construction. It is difficult to accomplish a complete separation of those architects whose work was illustrated through the efforts of the Society into Arts and Crafts followers and non-followers since many of them had at least two discrete phases of their career, the usual situation being either an involvement (earlier) in the Gothic Revival followed by an Arts and Crafts phase or the latter followed by a classicizing phase. Contributors who could be perceived as being in the Arts and Crafts circle at the time the Architectural Illustration Society was active were George Devey, Ernest Newton, Halsey Ricardo, Leonard Stokes, Philip Webb, Henry Wilson, John MacLaren (and his

architectural successors William Dunn and Robert Watson). Others, those whose approach to building Lethaby admired regardless of accompanying “stylistic flavors” included Norman Shaw, Shaw’s former partner, Eden Nesfield, G.F. Bodley, John Francis Bentley, Ernest George, E.S. Prior and the more classically-oriented John Belcher. How some remaining architects favored by the Society (George Gilbert Scott, Jr., E. Ingress Bell and T.E. Colcutt) might have been in communion with Lethaby’s architectural values is unclear.⁹²

Lethaby himself apparently did not contribute many illustrations to the Society’s publication efforts. One of the exceptions, Architectural Illustration Society #137, published in the January, 1888 issue of The Architect, was a fictive work inspired by the Pre-Raphaelite D.G. Rosetti’s poem “Rosemary” and entitled “The Beryl Shrine.”⁹³ Lethaby’s greater contribution lay rather in his role (unfortunately not entirely gaugeable) in the selection of the illustrations to be published, thus transmitting through graphical means, certain “lessons” or, in other words, his views on what should be admired in current work and that from the past.

Graphic publication—Lethaby’s Built Works

Lethaby’s own built architectural works do not seem to have been covered at the time they were actually constructed in any of the architectural trade journals although they were probably well-known at least in contemporary artistic circles because of Lethaby’s stature and his large number of acquaintances. Perhaps this was a matter of policy with Lethaby, following that of the architect he admired the most, Philip Webb. Webb refused to allow publication of his work, an interesting contrast with Shaw or to

⁹² The list of members in the Architectural Illustration Society is not available to this author so it is not possible to ascertain to what degree the members were engaged in the publication of their own works. Some of Colcutt’s work has been called “Arts and Crafts Baroque” (e.g. his Lloyd’s Shipping Register, Fenchurch St., London, 1900). He is perhaps best known for the eclectic Imperial Institute (London, 1887-93). Bell, classicizing and eclectic, is remembered for, among other works, the Victoria and Albert Museum and several significant buildings at the University of Birmingham. His partner in this was Sir Aston Webb (1849-1930). Sir Ernest George (1839-1922), it may be remembered, had had Lutyens as an assistant.

⁹³ See G. Rubens in Service’s Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, p. 133 (caption for figure 3). His other known published illustration this series appeared in the Nov. 28, 1890 issue of The Architect. Lethaby, as mentioned earlier, also provided the drawing to serve as the frontispiece for a posthumous edition of John Sedding’s Garden Craft Old and New.

another eminent architect philosophically close to Lethaby, fellow arts and crafts practitioner Voysey. This “embargo,” if it was one, apparently did not apply to coverage in print of all of Lethaby’s non-architectural design work. Issues of The Studio from 1893 and 1896, for example, carried illustrations of various pieces for which Lethaby was given credit.⁹⁴

Lethaby’s architectural works were covered later in his lifetime, after he had effectively retired from regular architectural practice, under the auspices of a periodical of interest more wide-ranging than the strictly architectural, in the magazine Country Life. Essentially two different vehicles were used in this magazine, both employing the high quality black and white photos for which it is known in the publication of illustrations of Lethaby’s completed architectural works. One means involved publication in the regular issues of the magazine. Thus were covered Lethaby’s Eagle Insurance Building and Avon Tyrell in 1910, his house at High Coxlease in 1911 and the All Saints Church at Brockhampton in 1915. Lethaby’s friend, Lawrence Weaver (b. 1887-dead by 1933) of the Design and Industries Association, was the editor of Country Life during this period.⁹⁵ Beginning a bit before the aforementioned expositions of Lethaby’s work, which incidentally, carried text written by Weaver, was a second means. This was a more architecturally-focused enterprise of Country Life, a series of volumes under the common title, Small Country Houses of Today. Volume I of the series, published c. 1909, showed Lethaby’s Birmingham-area house, “The Hurst.”⁹⁶ This seems to be the first instance of Lethaby’s architectural work being illustrated by domestic publishers (it had already been done shortly before in Germany).

⁹⁴ In an 1893 issue of The Studio a cabinet and a fireplace by Lethaby were illustrated. In 1896 The Studio showed another of his tables and a chimneypiece, produced, as usual, in collaboration with others—this time with J.J. Cobden-Sanderson. Also mentioned were some other small pieces by him—some gas brackets, enameled candlesticks, electric light fixtures, gas pendants and two book plates (not published). In the exhibit were also photos of St. Swithin’s Church (1892), which Lethaby had finished for Newton (acknowledged as such in the exhibit) and one of his own commissions. (At this point in time this only could have been Avon Tyrell or “The Hurst.”)

⁹⁵ Another connection between Weaver and Lethaby was their mutual involvement in the Design of Industries Association. Lethaby, as noted earlier, was one of the founders. Perhaps Weaver was also. It at least can be said that he did serve as President of the Association.

⁹⁶ Peter Davey has suggested that the date of Volume I may have been 1909 (Architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Rizzoli, New York, 1980, p. 218).

Volume two (1919) only briefly mentioned Lethaby as was the case in the final volume (1925), the only one not edited by Weaver.⁹⁷

The German architect, Hermann Muthesius (1861-1927) was the main publicist abroad for Lethaby's design work.⁹⁸ Muthesius was a friend of Lethaby whom he knew through the former's posting as attaché to the German embassy in London from 1896, a post he held for about seven years. Largely as a consequence of his stay in England, Muthesius published several books on English architecture in German. The earliest of his books to involve Lethaby, whom he may have known as early as 1896, was Das Englische baukunst der gegenwart (1900). Lethaby's baptismal font cover for Shaw's previously mentioned church commission at Low Bentham was illustrated in this book and there was included also an elevation and section of Shaw's Holy Trinity Church (Latimer Road, London) in design or which Lethaby is thought to have had a major role.

A more significant publishing undertaken by Muthesius with respect to Lethaby's work was the famous three volume sequence Das Englische Haus (first edition 1904-05). Volume I in the second edition from 1908 contained illustrations and comments on Lethaby's "Avon Tyrell" and some works by Shaw in which Lethaby had probably been involved such as "Dawpool" and various works at Bedford Park. Volume II in the second edition from 1910 contained a perspective view of Lethaby's "The Hurst" and such Lethaby-assisted works of Shaw as Albert Hall Mansions, the Alliance Insurance Co., the residence at #68 Cadogan square, London, and "Dawpool." Volume III in the second edition from 1911 showed a view into the interior of the drawing room at "The Hurst" and some interior details in the

⁹⁷ Randall Phillips edited the 1925 publication. The first volume also contained works by the following people in Lethaby's circle or at least of like mind at the time: Ernest Barnsley, W.H. Bidlake, Walter Cave, Ernest Gimson, Edwin Lutyens, Mervyn Macartney, Oswald Milne, Ernest Newton, Alfred Powell, C.H.B. Quennell, Halsey Ricardo, M.H. Baillie-Scott, Cecil Brewer, F.W. Troup, C.F.A. Voysey, Philip Webb, Edgar Wood, Charles Spooner and Dunbar Smith (and his partner). Similarly, the second volume included again works by Gimson, Lutyens and Milne as well as those by E.S. Prior, Reginald Blomfield and H.S. Goodhart-Rendel. The proportion of Arts and Crafts works in this publication dropped compared to the first one and this trend continued in Volume III in which, however, works by Newton, Milne, and Robert S. Weir were included.

⁹⁸ More about Lethaby's connection with Muthesius and with Germany in general will be included in Chapter XIV.

picture gallery at “Dawpool.”⁹⁹ Examination of the first edition of the series just commented upon, an edition not available in the conduct of this study, would very probably confirm that the works connected to Lethaby which were presented in the second edition also appeared in the earlier edition, on average, about half a decade earlier.

Conclusion

In this chapter data and commentary on those aspects of Lethaby’s personal life which seem likely to have had a bearing on his architectural theory were first presented. This included a discussion of his education, training, professional activities, travels and various kinds of contacts. After that some information was offered about the various ways Lethaby’s point of view was made known to others. This second body of information, about the dissemination of Lethaby’s thought, also helps give a fuller picture of the various activities which can be connected with his various emphases of his career. All of the foregoing information in the chapter has hopefully helped provide a useful background to the main aim of this study, the better understanding of Lethaby’s architectural theory. The most important points to emerge from the preceding discussion include the facts of Lethaby’s close association with some of the other figures influencing the course of architecture in his day (especially Shaw, Webb and Morris), his activism, his eclectic interests and his prolific performance as a writer on present and past architecture. That Lethaby carried out of his beliefs in practice, his belief in collaborative effort for instance, was also illustrated.

Through the particular circumstances of his upbringing, education, training, contacts and experiences Lethaby evolved a discrete body of ideas about life and about architecture, including his

⁹⁹ Muthesius’ internationally-oriented Das Moderne Landhaus und seine innere ausslaltung (1905, with many plates) included coverage of the works of the following Arts and Crafts-related practitioners from the British Isles: M.H. Baillie-Scott, Ernest Newton, C.R. Mackintosh and Cecil Brewer. In the volumes of Das Englische Haus, the work of Arts and Crafts architects and designers are, overwhelmingly, the type featured. This included, in Volume I the work of C.F.A. Voysey, Leonard Stokes, Edgar Wood, M.H. Baillie-Scott, C.R. Mackintosh and Walter Cave. Sidney Barnsley, C. Harrison Townsend and C.R. Ashbee are also discussed, but no illustrations of their work were included. Similarly, in Volume Two, also can be found illustrations of works of Voysey, Baillie-Scott, and Cave as well as those of E.S. Prior and Norman Shaw. Volume Three included the architectural work of Baillie-Scott, Voysey, and Mackintosh as well as that of Ashbee and W.H. Bidlake. The craft work of William Morris, Walter Crane, and Selwyn Image was also featured, as was that of Voysey, Baillie-Scott, and Wood.

identification of certain disagreeable aspects of the architecture in his own time and that of the earlier decades of the nineteenth century. As historian and antiquarian, Lethaby amassed considerable knowledge about past architecture, both about that of the recent past and that more removed in time. His perspective as to how architecture was to be approached in his own time clearly contributed to his views about past architectural development and, completing what must be a somewhat circular pattern of influences, he employed his particular view of architectural history as part of the underpinning for the theories he developed about architecture in his own time.

The first part of the next chapter begins with discussion of Lethaby's views on contemporary conditions. The second (and last) major part of the following chapter concentrates on characterizing Lethaby's general view of past architectural developments in the belief that this is very much interconnected to his point of view about conditions in his own time and that understanding the former is aided greatly by some understanding of the latter.

CHAPTER II

CRITICISM OF THE PRESENT AND AN EXPLANATION OF THE PAST

The aims of this Chapter are two-fold. The first is to present a general picture as to how Lethaby viewed developments in his time—this discussion to precede the ones addressing specific topics as found in Chapter IV through XV. The second is to discuss Lethaby's view of past architectural events, especially as they might have some bearing on his views about contemporary architecture.¹

Lethaby, like many others, made studies of particular subjects from architectural history without any evident concern for the use of knowledge thus gained to help solve contemporary problems. But on many occasions, Lethaby connected past architectural events and practices with conditions in his time. It is evident that he often made observations about past societies to instruct about the present and future—what to emulate, what to avoid, what is valid in a timeless, universal sense, and what is not. In fact, Lethaby's criticisms of present conditions (his view on modern conditions in the arts, including architecture, were mainly negative) rest partially on his interpretation of past architectural events.² But it might also be argued that Lethaby's appraisal of past architectural events was governed by and perhaps constructed to reinforce what he believed about contemporary architecture.

A thorough analysis of Lethaby's activities as an architectural and art historian could easily constitute an entire study of its own. In view of Lethaby's contribution to the body of literature in these fields and the attendant raising of our level of knowledge—especially in regard to medieval subjects—a careful compilation of his related written works would be useful and a thoughtful assessment of these desirable. Given Lethaby's prominence as an architectural historian in the early days of the twentieth century, a study of his historiographical methods, including an identification and discussion of his

¹ The discussion of Lethaby's views on contemporary architecture and his view of past architectural events, it was decided, should come early in this study. The other component to be presented early on, a discussion of what Lethaby meant in his use of certain architectural terms, will follow in the next chapter.

² His prescriptions for how to improve things are dealt with more specifically in Chapter XV.

strengths, weaknesses, and biases would also a worthy undertaking and that, in fact, has been attempted here.³

But attempting to offer deeper insights pertaining to the aforementioned topics is not in itself one of the goals of this study. Rather, the aim here in the discussion of Lethaby's views on past architecture and related subjects is to try to understand these in order to gain insight as to his thinking about the architecture of his own time. It is unusual that a writer who became noted for work on historical subjects in the arts would also become noteworthy among those assessing and criticizing contemporary events. However, this is true of Lethaby, with reference to architecture.

Employing a reverse chronological arrangement, the exposition of material in this chapter will proceed as follows: First, Lethaby's views on and criticism of conditions in his own time and the earlier years of the nineteenth century, as these might be relevant to his architectural thought. Second, discussion on Lethaby's thoughts about the more distant past, beginning with his conception of the over-all relationships and connections between various past events in architecture and later taking up his views on ancient, medieval, Renaissance and other periods up to the nineteenth century. Included in this last is an assessment of the role played by "mysticism" and "mystery" in Lethaby's thinking about past architecture, because of the unusual attention he gave these for a historian of his day. Finally are offered some thoughts on the disparities and similarities between Lethaby's criticisms of the present and those of others with respect to architecture and also their respective views of the past.

The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

In studying Lethaby's opinions about architectural conditions in his own time, a number of themes can be noticed. While he brought up some of these more frequently in one period of his life or another, the major themes can be found throughout his writings from the early ones of the 1880s and 1890s to his last (1931). Some of Lethaby's positions were shaped by new developments which emerged during his

³ See, for example, Charlotte Brown's doctoral dissertation "W.R. Lethaby: Architecture as Process..." University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1974 (1975 Authorized facsimile).

lifetime, as was the case with the International Style. Some of Lethaby's views developed as a consequence of events occurring later in his life, and these did not, therefore, appear in his early writings. However, concerns which Lethaby developed early rarely seem to have abated enough in his later years that he no longer felt the need to comment on them. Most of Lethaby's criticisms about architecture in his time, although these underwent some change over time, were maintained, by and large, throughout his career with a rigorous consistency. Lethaby's convictions were received, as was the case with others who shared their views with the general populace, with varying amounts (varying with time and with the issue at hand) of public sympathy. The power of a particular notion of Lethaby's as a force in society diminished as conditions in society or society's perception of these conditions changed.

Contemporary subjects that attracted Lethaby's attention and drew his criticism included the question of the applicability of the "Styles" (Gothic, Greek, etc.) to satisfy modern needs. Also, he questioned the suitability of the type of ornament that was then being applied to architectural works and attacked the motivation behind its use. He also questioned contemporary design practice and, as a true disciple of Arts and Crafts philosophy, he could not see how a designer physically removed from actual production of what was designed could produce something acceptable. His belief in the desirability of a universal participation in the artistic experience and his egalitarian political views led him to attack "elitism" in the practice of architecture. Architecture and the other arts, Lethaby said, had become isolated from the common man. He believed that architects, at the top of the building industry hierarchy, were excessively concerned with exercising the social perquisites of their positions. He also suggested that self-conscious "individualism" played a negative role in the artistic production of his time. As the designer suffered from physical separation from the actual constructive process, the actual maker suffered in a different way. Continuing the arguments of Morris, Lethaby expressed concern for the plight of the workers, who as a consequence of modern production procedures, were reduced to dull routine,

prohibited from allowing the currents of their own artistic inspiration to pass into the created form.⁴ As a result, Lethaby said, the true craftsman was on the road to extinction.

Lethaby also doubted those in the field of architecture whom he thought were dwelling too much in the realm of theory. This direction in his criticism complements his reluctance or perhaps suggests an inability to develop and articulate a cohesive architectural theory. Critics also pursued an occupation of doubtful value in Lethaby's eyes. Lethaby himself, however, did not hold back his views on the state of modern architecture and frequently furnished his readers with examples of both good and bad buildings of recent vintage. These observations were extended to include appraisals of the state of Art in general; these and his feelings about various art "movements" of the earlier twentieth century led him to an increasingly pessimistic view, despite occasional bright spots. What seemed to be a multiplicity of directions in art was depressing to Lethaby, who was convinced that great periods of art were the result of a thorough consensus by the creating society as to goals and values. The notion of the medieval community, for example, all toiling with like mind in the construction of a single great cathedral greatly appealed to him.

On the issue of technology, Lethaby differed some from his mentors, Ruskin and Morris. Lethaby had some interesting ideas for reconciling machine-production with the principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement. One should mention that Lethaby's view of the performance of machinery up to his time was not pleasing and neither was engineering in general. Some criticism of engineers was levied because they did not resist the encrusting of their works with the sinful confections of their architectural associates. Regarding architectural education, Lethaby wrote about what he thought was worthwhile and, what he more often encountered, what was a waste of time or even detrimental. On learning in general, Lethaby identified what he thought had not been but could be gleaned from a study of the past. For him there might be a great number of lessons to be learned but certainly this was not the meticulous but uninformed copying of by-gone forms.

⁴ In 1925, in a comment from his series of articles on Philip Webb in *The Builder*, Lethaby still wrote of the degradation of art workers. (As found in the repr, in book form, *Philip Webb*, London: Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 64.)

The following sections each focus on some specific topic which, though treated only briefly, helps define Lethaby's general attitude about architecture in his own time. Expanded discussion of a number of these can be found in the chapter following, although not necessarily in the order presented here.

Lethaby's Views on the "Styles"

".... to design sham Greek or Gothic is about as intellectual a pursuit as it would be to string together signs from tea boxes and suppose that one was writing Chinese."⁵

These words by Lethaby in the third decade of the twentieth century show Lethaby's opposition to "style"-based architecture—an opposition consistently maintained throughout his career. This opposition extended to all variants of stylistic revival. In 1921 Lethaby gave one example of the inappropriateness of trying to recreate the architecture of the past, observing that: "An American might build a bigger Stonehenge outside New York but since the culture was not that of the original, the architectural exercise wouldn't mean much."⁶ Eleven years earlier (1908), when the revival of classical forms was an even stronger architectural current, Lethaby has said: "There is nothing as far from the classic spirit as some of the modern works which claim the name."⁷ How classical architecture came to be as it was depended on the beliefs, needs and customs of the society that produced it, Lethaby observed. To make use of, say, Corinthian columns as a "design decision" in the twentieth century was wrong Lethaby thought. Cloaking buildings in medieval garb, his own love of real medieval architecture notwithstanding, was as mistaken as using the vocabulary of classical antiquity, and for the same reasons. Old works, he reminded, were properly "antiquities" which should not be used as so many selections from a "style catalog."⁸ Lethaby linked the "style" problem of his age with revivalist attitudes he believed had been operating in the Renaissance, and asserted that "modern gothic" is only "another fashion arrived at in the Renaissance

⁵ "Modernism and Design" (4 Nov., 1921, Part XI: "Function, Finish and Fitness"), The Builder, p. 609.

⁶ "Modernism and Design," 1 July, 1921, Part VII: "The Uses of Antiquity," The Builder, p. 7.

⁷ "The Theory of Greek Architecture" (8 Feb., 1908), R.I.B.A.J., p. 218. Orig. an address to students and the R.I.B.A. General Meeting, Monday, Feb. 3, 1908.

⁸ "Modernism and Design," Part VII: "The Uses of Antiquity," op.cit., p. 7.

manner.” Style copying was equally bad regardless of the source of inspiration. Sham Gothic cathedrals were just as “artistically worthless as shops and cinemas in the Sham Renaissance Style.”⁹

Earlier (1897), Lethaby underlined the ephemeral nature of stylistic currents while striking a blow against nineteenth century restorers: “When all real Gothic is altered into Sham Gothic, that....enthusiasm also will have evaporated.”¹⁰ Earlier still (1889), during the height of nineteenth century eclecticism in England (as well as in Europe and in America), Lethaby stated that “true architecture” doesn’t mean the “mere interweaving of shreds of past art, however clever.”¹¹ Remarks made much later show the continuance of these views. In 1929, for example, Lethaby wrote that if one looked back on modern architectural works according to “the dissolving views of several enthusiasms [styles],” one would find that these do not have staying power. Included were the products of the “terra-cotta” movement (known more widely today as the Aesthetic Movement), the “Gothic Tudor,” “Byzantine” and the “Grand Manner”—the latter paralleling Continental classicizing trends tending towards the Baroque and emulation of the more opulent examples of the late stages of Greek and Roman architecture.¹²

Lethaby complained in 1910 that people praised buildings only if they had “columns” and in 1913 wrote of the “excessive” regard for the old and the recent “reaction from modern ways”—meaning in this latter phrase, presumably, disregard for the prescriptions of the Arts and Crafts Movement.¹³ His frustration with the resurgent classicizing trends of the early twentieth century was expressed in 1915 when he lamented that in England, just as “Free Building” (Arts and Crafts-related architecture) arrived, a

⁹ “Renaissance and Modern,” TS, n.d., pp. 3-4 (with Lethaby’s papers kept at the North Devon Athenaeum, Barnstaple). Later references to this source location will henceforth be just designated “Barnstaple.”

¹⁰ “Technical Education and the Building Trades,” Journal of the Society of Arts, 45 (23 July, 1897), p. 853.

¹¹ “Of the Motive in Architectural Design,” Architectural Association Notes, IV, No. 32 (Nov., 1889), p. 24.

¹² “Architecture as Engineering,” (1929), The Builder, Part II, CXXXVI, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

¹³ Respectively: “The Architecture of Adventure,” as repr. in Form in..., 1922, p. 85 (orig. given as an R.I.B.A. address, 18 Apr., 1910) and “Art and Workmanship” (orig. publ. in the Imprint, 1913, as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 212.

reaction took place accompanied by a return to the “catalogued” styles.¹⁴ In 1911, he had advised that “Greek” and “Gothic” were not needed but an efficient method was. Preconceptions about “styles” in building, he said then, blocked the way to both “high utility” and “high expression.”¹⁵

As noted, Lethaby’s point of view about architectural “styles” did not change in later years. He wrote in 1925 of the “puerile imitations at Exeter and Edinburgh”—Venetian as seen in book illustrations.¹⁶ Lethaby criticized the competition for the new cathedral at Lille (France), saying that it was the first modern cathedral to be “designed” in the Gothic Style and an “innocent confusion” with the real thing.¹⁷ Contemporary architectural teachers were also criticized for perpetuating the “styles”; particularly singled out in 1925 were (Sir Charles R.) “Cockerell’s Sham-Greek,” the “American Version of Beaux Arts,” and the Baroque.¹⁸

Ornament

“We are imprisoned with a limited sphere of ideas...[Architects do] new combinations with known and outworn elements – so that no reasonable explanation can be given for the great number of secondary forms with which even our most successful buildings are covered.”¹⁹

Lethaby, in assessing the state of architectural ornamentation in 1906 objected in the preceding passage to the application of older motives and forms whose significance was no longer apprehended.²⁰

¹⁴ “Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn From It” (orig. 1915, address to the Architectural Association), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 100.

¹⁵ Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., p. 98.

¹⁶ Orig. a series on Webb in The Builder (1925); as found in 1935 book version, Philip Webb, p. 84.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 85.

¹⁹ “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship,” a paper read at the International Congress of Architects, 1906, p. 1 of the printed copy kept with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstable.

²⁰ *Ibid*. A few years later (1911), he reminded readers that the egg and dart once had a meaning—but not in his own time. (Architecture, 1955 ed., p. 188). Similarly, in 1930, he observed that the “egg and tongue motif was very worn out today.” (“The Spirit of Antiquity,” Modern Building, 18 Sept., 1930, p. 5.)

A more interesting side of Lethaby's views on contemporary architectural ornament is shown in a remark he made in 1911 when, travelling some distance towards Adolph Loos' position, he allowed that beauty (and by implication, architecture) might be unadorned.²¹ In the use of the qualifying "might," Lethaby is perhaps closer to Louis Sullivan's opinion of the 1890s that architecture could benefit from giving up ornament temporarily, until an appropriate ornament to the present age could be developed. Later, however, when Bauhaus-inspired architecture, which largely eschewed ornament in the conventional sense, gained prominence, Lethaby tried to show by unfavorable contrast to the work of his mentor, Philip Webb, for example, that "bareness" was not the way.²² The issue of the machine was a factor in the formation of Lethaby's ideas about doing without, or at least reducing, architectural ornament. As early as 1893 Lethaby had protested against "commercially produced imitation ornament" for of course for him, it could not be legitimate ornament without the labors of the skilled craftsman.²³

"Design" as Currently Practiced

"Design as design is a modern disease"²⁴

The use of architectural "styles" and the nature of architectural ornament are bound to design practice and Lethaby was concerned with the latter, broader issue as well. His view of contemporary architectural design practice, as the foregoing quote expresses, was quite negative. He also noted in this writing from 1924 that design "in the modern sense of contriving striking 'effects' was unknown in ancient art."²⁵ Lethaby also objected earlier (1921) to a concept of design which relied on the specially

²¹ See especially Loos' Ornament und Verbrechen, 1908. (Loos' essay was only made widely accessible 1912-13.)

²² Orig. a series on Webb in The Builder (1925), as publ. in book version, Philip Webb (1935), pp. 134.

²³ Leadwork, London: Macmillan, 1893, p. 2.

²⁴ Lethaby's letter entitled "Architecture, Design, Education," letter prepared in the context of the International Congress on Architectural Education, 1924, p. 1 of the two-page printed excerpt among Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple. The letter was publ. in the R.I.B.A.J. (1924, pp. 73-74) with other material relevant to the Congress' theme, "Architectural Education in the Future."

²⁵ Ibid.

gifted and he bemoaned that architectural design work was in the hands of “a little band of experts.”²⁶

Those learning the architectural profession in his day were given the wrong idea about what a designer should be, Lethaby thought. Students, he said sarcastically in 1924, were under the impression that to be a competent designer was to be “a master joker of whim works.”²⁷

Being self-conscious about one’s work was also an undesirable trait for a designer. This was, Lethaby thought, a bigger problem than in previous times. He wrote in 1911: “The Renaissance was self-conscious but moderns are conscious that they are self-conscious.”²⁸ All of this was antithetical to Lethaby’s vision of an ideal art which was the spontaneous product of a common-minded society where the artist was not the rare genius who could dazzle with almost magical effects.

Early in Lethaby’s writing (1892) one sees interest in a designer-versus-maker problem. He wrote then, quoting Ruskin, about the ongoing tendency to separate the “thinker” from the “doer”: “we want one man always thinking and another always working.”²⁹ In 1906 Lethaby commented in a similar vein about the architect’s “isolation” from craftsmanship, of his being “imprisoned in a small sphere of ideas.”³⁰ He noted: “As at present...the profession of architecture is shut away almost completely from any direct relationship with workmanship.”³¹ There was, as a result, “small possibility of healthy and intelligent growth.”³² Fifteen years later Lethaby, still the Arts and Crafts theorist (on this point anyway), can be found urging the architect to get close to the work and to materials; then he said, there would be no

²⁶ Introduction by Lethaby (dated 29 Sept., 1921) to the Catalog of the Oct. 1921 Exhibition of the Red Rose Guild of Art Workers (Deansgate), Manchester, p. 5.

²⁷ “Architecture, Design, Education,” 1924 letter, p. 2 of excerpt (p. 74 as publ. in the R.I.B.A.J.).

²⁸ Architecture (1911), op.cit., p. 189 of 1955 ed.

²⁹ “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman” in Architecture, a Profession or an Art? (1892), Thomas Graham Jackson and R. Norman Shaw, eds., London: John Murray, 1892, p. 160.

³⁰ “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship” (1906), p. 1 of printed excerpt at Barnstaple. A similar note is sounded in 1915 about conditions in an earlier period. He noted then separation of design and manufacturing around the mid-point of the nineteenth century. (“Design and Industry,” 1915, as in Form in..., 1922, op.cit., p. 48.)

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

necessity to “go on pretending that we could command bands of rapturous monks and Greek sculptors to do ‘Gothic’ and ‘Classic’ for us...”³³

Lethaby’s comments on the nature of architecture include some notions which can be related to his criticism of current design procedures. The “‘architectural’ myth” was “a disease of snobbery, all hidden behind ‘gifts’, ‘art talk,’ ‘assumptions,’ ‘beliefs,’ and ‘eminence.’”³⁴ Contemporary architects were characterized at times as undesirable elements in the sphere of building construction. Lethaby went so far as to say: “there can be no architecture while there are architects.”³⁵ And he told of the plight of contemporary architects: “At present architects are at the mercy of vulgar accidents, such as having a flow of dinner talk, or being in a business syndicate, or knowing a lord.”³⁶ Lethaby complained that “one of the most important things [currently] in modern architecture is the art of dining out.”³⁷

Workers and Architects

Some of our most gifted architects...have tried to give their buildings the appearance of handiwork (designing in “roughness” and “accidents”)...but such a procedure is but one more partition between us and the veracities of art and one more burden for labour called in to parody labour.³⁸

In the preceding excerpt from 1906 Lethaby also implied that the idea of hand-made elements in building was important enough to society that architects, even when capitulating to cost considerations,

³³ “Modernism and Design,” Part II: “Positive Data,” 4 Feb., 1921, The Builder, cxxx, p. 156.

³⁴ From a privately printed collection of Lethaby’s writings, Alfred Powell, ed., Scripts and Scraps, Cirencester: Earle and Ludlow, 1956, p. 19. (Orig. date of quote not given.)

³⁵ Scripts and Scraps, 1956 book version, p. 19. Orig. date of Lethaby’s words not given. Publ. also postum. (p. 143, 15 Jan., 1932 in part 2 of a four-part series “The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby” in The Builder, in which some excerpts from Lethaby’s writings were offered, ed. by William Davidson.) See also: “An architect now is an entrepreneur to advertisement firms, butler to new richness, or an acolyte to Oxford clergy.” (“Scripts and Scraps,” TS—A compilation of comments by Lethaby kept at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, London. Orig. date of Lethaby’s words not given; Alfred Powell served as ed. of the 1956 bound volume of Lethaby’s sayings. That volume, Scripts and Scraps, Cirencester: Earle and Ludlow, was privately printed. It seems probable that Powell also edited the TS cited.

³⁶ “The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby,” Part 1, 8 Jan., 1932, The Builder, p. 53.

³⁷ “Education of the Architect” (1917), as repr. in Form in..., op.cit., p. 132. Orig. an address to the R.I.B.A. Informal Conference, 2 May, 1917.

³⁸ “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship,” 1906, op.cit., p. 1 of printed excerpt at Barnstaple.

would try to provide at least the illusion of the human touch. But Lethaby noted then that modern building was “the result of practically servile labour, and of course, bears its mark.”³⁹ Thus, the problems of modern architectural work had their roots not only in conditions pertaining to the designer (or “thinker”) as indicated, but also in those of the worker (or doer). Industry, as he observed earlier, had taken an undesirable turn and a distasteful (capitalist) system could be blamed in part: “Too many of our industries have fallen out of the categories of art into mere ‘production’ ...[which is] wanton and careless, of no other end than immediate profit.”⁴⁰ Just after the turn of the twentieth century, Lethaby summarized the four main doctrines of Morris and championed their ongoing validity. Two of these concerned labor’s relationship to society-at-large—namely a) that labor’s place relative to “book-learning” should be revalued and b) that art will redeem labor from being a curse.⁴¹ The side Lethaby took in the book-learner versus-manual laborer struggle is shown again in his reminding readers of the contempt of the “handy people” for the “paper people” in Morris’ News from Nowhere of 1871.⁴²

Lethaby not only pointed out the problem of separating designer from maker but also, in 1920, one involving the separating of the product (in this case, architecture) from whom Lethaby viewed as the rightful consumer, the common man.⁴³ Instead of being concerned with the needs of the populace-at-large, Lethaby said in 1917 that architects were “hangers-on,” satisfying only the “whims of generously minded employers.”⁴⁴ The work tradition was undermined by the profit motive.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁰ “Cast Iron and Its Treatment for Artistic Purposes,” Journal of the Society of Arts, XXXVII, 14 Feb., 1890, p. 273.

⁴¹ Morris as Workmaster, London: J. Hogg, 1901, p. 12. Orig. a lecture given at the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, 26 Oct., 1901. Lethaby also quoted Ruskin here: “Industry without art is brutality.” (Ibid., orig. sources in Morris and Ruskin not identified).

⁴² Scripts and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 23. Orig. date of Lethaby’s words not given, but is from 1890 or later.

⁴³ “Architecture as Form in Civilization,” as repr. in Form in..., 1922, p. 7. Orig. pub. in the London Mercury, 1920.

⁴⁴ “Education of the Architect,” as publ. in Form in... (1922), p. 132. Orig. an address given at the R.I.B.A Informal Conference in 1917.

Architects should not divorce themselves completely from being actual executants of work, Lethaby believed. He wished to preserve the artistic side of architectural practice; writing a year or so after entering practice on his own, Lethaby said: “[A]n architect may [now?] receive remuneration under twenty-three heads [but doesn’t recognize]...the possibility of his working as an artist on his own building.”⁴⁵ The same year (1892) he mourned the passing of the craft of the stucco-maker and criticized the three-coat plastering specification that, he said, was the order of the day.⁴⁶ Elsewhere he noted that even in his own time (in earlier days) there were good craftsman everywhere, but now” like the chain shops under a ‘trade-lord’ the crafts were under a ‘machine lord’ and suffered from it.”⁴⁷

Theorists, Critics and the Need for Consensus

Art Criticism: “Gush, slush, mush, tush”⁴⁸

Particularly in the last two decades of his writings one finds Lethaby making negative pronouncements on the value of critics and theorists. Perhaps this attitude emerged as a reaction to the success critics such as Roger Fry had attained in changing British thinking about modern art.⁴⁹ Lethaby questioned the aesthetic theories put forth by those he called “word philosophers” and claimed that they did not really know about art (although he would have excepted his colleague from the Art Workers Guild Fry here) but instead “argued down from the pure idea.”⁵⁰ In another writing from the same year, Lethaby

⁴⁵ “The Builders Art and The Craftsman” in Architecture, A Profession... (1892), op.cit., p. 168.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 158.

⁴⁷ Scraps and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 30. Orig. date of Lethaby’s words not given.

⁴⁸ “Scraps and Scraps,” TS, Version 1, item #3 under “Poems.” (A compilation of comments and writings by Lethaby kept at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, London. Orig. date of Lethaby’s words not given.

⁴⁹ Lethaby did not follow this colleague from the Art Worker’s Guild in the latter’s championing of new directions in painting.

⁵⁰ “What Shall We Call Beautiful,” as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 165. (Orig. publ. in the Hibbert Journal, April, 1918.)

noted that current criticism (“What little there is”) was aimed at “enjoyment,” not “growth.”⁵¹ Criticism, he noted elsewhere, was aimed at furthering the aesthetic pleasure of the beholder, not the continued improvement of art. The arts, he predicted, would only flourish when there was widespread common interest in them and “constant criticism by all...that is, by all people except critics.”⁵² In 1917 Lethaby commented: “Art under the influence of the critics and the daily press [and art dealers]...means only exhibitions of oil paintings.”⁵³ Lethaby objected (1926) to a view of art for the present based only on “amusement and luxury” and expressed his dislike for what he saw as a tendency to restrict the definition of art to “a few narrow fields.” The “financial world,” he said, was the chief beneficiary of this approach.⁵⁴

Focusing on his own specialty, architecture, Lethaby called in 1917 for “a criticism...which sees more in architecture than taste and scholarship.”⁵⁵ Similarly, in the 1920s, Lethaby is found to be anti “aesthetic experts” and advised that we should forget “aesthetics.”⁵⁶ Another remonstrance to this effect compared architecture to transportation vehicles. Lethaby pointed out that when ship builders and car builders worked, they considered “soundness, shapeliness, precision, and workmanlike finish” and that they “seem never to have been confused as architects unfortunately have, by theories of aesthetics.” In the

⁵¹ “The Spirit of Rome and Our Modern Problem in Architecture,” Architectural Review, XLI (Jan. 1917), p. 4.

⁵² “The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby,” The Builder, 8 Jan., 1932, p. 53.

⁵³ “The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., p. 4.

⁵⁴ Material in the last two sentences from “Industry and the Notion of Art” (1926), as found in repr. of Lethaby’s address to the Seventh Annual Lecture Conference on Industrial Welfare, Balliol College, Oxford, Sept. 10-15, 1926, pp. 33 and 34. See also Julius Posener’s Anfänge des Functionalismus, 1964, in which excerpts from this address appear under the title “Industry and the Coordination of Art.”

⁵⁵ “The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., p. 3.

⁵⁶ Re: “Aesthetic experts”: see “Modernism and Design” (2 Sept., 1921), The Builder, Part IX: “Building Commonplaces, the Substance of Architecture,” p. 288; re: forgetting aesthetics: see “Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder, cxxxvi, 11 Jan., 1929, p. 52. One can think of Corbusier’s analogies along this line in Vers Une Architecture (from 1922). Le Corbusier’s book was publ. in 1923, drawing from articles he wrote in L’Esprit Nouveau from Oct. 1920 through Jan. 1922.

same writing he allowed that theories are all right “in their place” but that artists and artisans should disregard them.⁵⁷

The problem of too little consensus in the world of art also distressed Lethaby. In 1917 he noted: “We have lived under an anarchy of opinions...”⁵⁸ In 1908 he had complained of the incompatibility of the many theories in existence.⁵⁹ Of the variety of theories, those founded on classicism (and especially those having to do with classical systems of proportion) drew the strongest fire. At the time of a period of resurgent classicism Lethaby stated: “The Greek ideal of proportion cannot be brought back,...and indeed, to some extent may have been mistaken...”⁶⁰ In 1911 he advised rejecting the theory that certain proportions satisfy the eye and that time spent trying to extract the proportional system of the ancient Greeks was wasted insofar as modern work was concerned.⁶¹

Lethaby often spoke of the need in the present for some overall kind of unity. This would be necessary, he thought, if architecture was to improve. In 1906 he wrote dispiritedly that he believed there was little chance of this and observed that: “sudden changes of fashion preclude all chance at present of a process of growth.”⁶² Permissiveness was also a problem, he observed in 1911.⁶³ Along this line, in 1908 he wrote: “Now, with our genius and originality, we are all little separate pyramids, six feet high, at most,

⁵⁷ Material from the last two sentences from “Origins” TS, n.d., kept with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.

⁵⁸ “The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), *op.cit.*, p. 4.

⁵⁹ “The Theory of Greek Architecture,” 1908, *op.cit.*, p. 214.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 217. Even people sympathetic to Lethaby’s approach were caught up in the new enthusiasm for the “classic.” Lawrence Weaver, the editor of Country Life, who had published Lethaby’s work in that magazine with enthusiastic commentary around 1908, predicted the development of a new national school of English architecture based on the classical. (see, for example, see preface to Vol. II, 2nd series, 1919, Small Country Houses of Today, orig. publ. c. 1905-1910 in three vols. by the London offices of Country Life.)

⁶¹ Architecture, as in the 1955 ed., pp. 185 and 70 respectively.

⁶² “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship” (1906), (*op. cit.*), p.1 of the 3-page printed excerpt with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.

⁶³ Architecture, as in 1955 ed., *op.cit.*, p 190.

our arts are one man thick – not ten thousand...”⁶⁴ Also, in 1917, with reference to the lack of a spiritual force which, one supposes, would serve to unify. We need, he said, comparing modern times to those of ancient Rome, a “Spirit” but don’t have one.⁶⁵ Expressed differently, in this same work Lethaby asserted that a “steadying force” was needed to “correct the anarchy of our streets.”⁶⁶ In 1918, he found no common agreement about what is satisfying.⁶⁷

The Current State of Art and Architecture

“Today there is everyday ugliness...confused by a flood of false taste ... equally removed from art and nature.” Thus Walter Crane assessed the architectural environment in 1889 England and Lethaby at this time of his own entry into architectural practice, would have agreed.⁶⁸ A few years later Lethaby described architectural education as the “study of lists of old buildings and their parts, classified and tabulated under every conceivable cross-indexing of ‘features,’ style, place and date.”⁶⁹ This, Lethaby continued, led to design being taught as “the scholarly rearrangement of drawn representations of...[the aforementioned] ‘features’ in a new drawing.”⁷⁰ Taught this way, design was nothing but a “classifying of past art” and it had no relevance for the present.⁷¹ In 1891 Lethaby had written that old architecture had had a purpose and asserted that new architecture must also. It was necessary that architecture have meaning for its own time in order to live.⁷²

⁶⁴ “The Theory of Greek Architecture” (1908), op.cit., p. 218.

⁶⁵ “The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., p. 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁶⁷ This observation is explored in “What Shall We Call Beautiful” (1918), op.cit.

⁶⁸ Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Catalog for the Second Exhibition (1889), p. 9. (Publisher and place of publ. n.a.; exhibition was held in the New Gallery, 121 Regents Street, London.)

⁶⁹ “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman,” as found in Architecture: A Profession or an Art?, Norman Shaw and T.G. Jackson, eds., 1892, p. 151.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (orig. 1891), as in 1975 reprint, op.cit., pp. 6-7.

In the next decade Lethaby observed that many countries were arriving at a characteristic style but that there was little depth of meaning. There was, Lethaby said, “no possibility of life such as existed when art was nearer to the sources of inspiration.”⁷³ Later, in 1921, he linked the past and the present together in the interesting statement that “true modernism and vital traditionism are one.” He suggested also that a viable living building tradition was actually “anti-antiquarian” and emphasized how far society has come from having a rational basis in regard to contemporary practices in the building industry: “...anything reasonable is likely to look very queer to our unaccustomed eyes.”⁷⁴ Anything smacking of the occult, he wrote a little earlier (1917), should be eliminated: “architecture must be removed from being a ‘bogey mystery.’”⁷⁵

Lethaby was not fond of “advertising” and sometimes linked the word with “architecture” in a mutually uncomplimentary way. In 1921 he reported that “at present, the dominant demand is for Commercial advertisement ‘architecture’ with Big-Store and Picture-Palace effects, and for this [purpose] what we get is doubtless ‘just the thing.’” The demand for this “advertisement architecture” he noted later the same year, was being satisfied with “a fat commercial imitation of ‘Renaissance.’”⁷⁶ Advertising is again brought up in a negative way in Lethaby’s comment that: “The identification of architecture with silly whims, vulgarities, and oppressive advertising ostentations must give place to true human expression—noble-mindedness, and even affection in building.”⁷⁷

⁷³ “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship,” op.cit., p. 1 of corrected proof version.

⁷⁴ Material from the last three sentences from “Modernism and Design” (1921), The Builder, Part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” 2 Dec., CXXXI, p. 749 and Part VIII: “The Mystery of Mouldings,” 5 Aug., CXXXI, p. 166.

⁷⁵ “The Spirit of Rome...,” op.cit., p. 2. But Lethaby, it should be noted, often used “mystery” in architecture as a double-edged sword, sometimes, unlike in the preceding passage, promoted as an absolutely essential ingredient. Lethaby’s view of “mystery” as a positive ingredient in architecture is discussed later in this chapter under the sub-heading “The Question of Mysticism in Lethaby’s View of the Past.”

⁷⁶ Material in this paragraph to this point from “Modernism and Design” (1921), The Builder, Part IX: “Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture,” 2 Sept., CXXI, p. 288, and Part X: “Planning Composition and Block Form,” 7 Oct., CXXI, p. 452.

⁷⁷ “Renaissance and Modern” TS, p. 6. One finds similarly in his book from 1911: “All modern buildings have too much that is capricious.” (Architecture, 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 187.)

The avenues open for contemporary architecture were presented by Lethaby in various ways. In 1925, he wrote that there were currently two ideals for the realization of architectural work: a) honest and sound building, and b) “brilliant drawings of exhibition designs.”⁷⁸ In the preceding, Lethaby presented a positive choice (the first) juxtaposed against the negative one, but sometimes the available paths, or at least those in existence, were all seen to be negative ones. The three existing paths, as enumerated in 1929, were:

- a) to go on with the “sham styles” and avoid discussing principles
- b) to follow the dictates of the Baroque-revival as Germany was doing, the Bauhaus notwithstanding
- c) observe Scandinavia and America and “imitate the ‘style’ of their results.”⁷⁹

As to his transatlantic neighbors Lethaby had offered a wistful comment earlier in the decade: “American architects have now ambitions beyond imitating Paris...before our [English] Academic reaction had matured we were giving ideas to the world.”⁸⁰

Lethaby usually regarded new architectural developments on the Continent as unfavorably as he did those in Britain. Typical was the following advice by Lethaby from 1921 about emulating the International Style: “It will be a shame to us if after a few years we try to copy a change worked out in

⁷⁸ Orig. passage on Webb in The Builder, as repr. in the book Philip Webb (1935), p. 125. A similar negative point was made by Lethaby in 1921 in The Builder regarding architecture, describing it as “paper designs” and “stage sets.” (“Modernism and Design,” Part IX: “Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture,” p. 288.)

⁷⁹ “Architecture as Structural Geometry” (1929), The Builder, CXXXVI, 11 Jan., p. 53. A description by Lethaby a few years earlier (1925, in his study of Philip Webb) of the choices in the previous century available for architecture to take (in which he clearly indicated which one he favored) presented the three current modes of building as:

- a) Classic – “embecilic,” which Lethaby also characterized as a continuation of the aristocratic demands of the previous century
- b) Gothic – a “sentimental but mistaken understanding of the old ‘national’ art”
- c) Positive – depending instead, unlike the other two, on a theory of art, materials, and modern building procedures. Lethaby suggested the continued validity of this third mode, as well.

This last list as found in 1935 book version, p. 84

⁸⁰ “Modernism and Design” (1921), The Builder, Part I: “Books or Buildings,” 7 Jan., CXXX, p. 3.

other countries.”⁸¹ In 1927, Lethaby’s friend Harry Peach had sent him some books on the Bauhaus; these, Lethaby said, “frightened me a little.” He dismissed the efforts of the Bauhaus as “another kind of ‘art-design.’”⁸² He also extended his criticism to new Dutch developments, perhaps the de Stijl movement; Lethaby said: “...these German and Holland art styles – I hate ‘em.” He went on in his letter to Peach that only two things interested him – “human, muddling workmanship” and “harsh science.”⁸³

Lethaby’s dissatisfaction with modern architecture has its parallel in his views on the other fine arts in his time. “[P]ainters and sculptors,” he observed once, are just as “style-withered” as architects currently are; “everything was ‘values’ and ‘planes,’ ” or else the works were allusions to El Greco and other old masters.⁸⁴ He continued that he would like to see a “workaday world” at the R.A. [Royal Academy], not a “lacquey’s paradise.”⁸⁵ Particularly in his article “Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy...” of 1920, Lethaby maintained that the gallery of the R.A. was populated with shallow people looking at pictures more shallow still.⁸⁶ The paintings there, he said, were “impersonations of success” and the exhibitionism he claimed to see there was one of the many symptoms of an “acquisitive” society.⁸⁷ In the same article, he condemned “latter-day extreme doctrine and practices” in painting; one couldn’t love “triangles, zig-zags, jazzeries for long.”⁸⁸

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 751. (Part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” 2 Dec., 1921.)

⁸² Letter to Harry Peach, 14 June, 1927, Lethaby papers at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, London. The British Design and Industries Association in which Peach figured prominently had goals similar to the Bauhaus, which had inspired it.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Scraps and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 39.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Common-place was preferable, said Lethaby. He asserted, not too convincingly, that Michelangelo, Phideas, and Blake were commonplace in their day (Ibid., p. 28).

⁸⁶ “Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy and the Higher Criticism of Art,” orig. in the Hibbert Journal, June 1920, as repr. in Form in ... (1922), p. 170.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 180.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 175.

Lethaby's judgment of particular recent movements in art was often harsh. He commented: "A true work of art is the crest of a big wave in a wide sea. Many modern pictures are ripples in a tea-cup."⁸⁹ One can find unfavorable references in Lethaby's words from 1918 to Blastism (a synonym for Wyndham Lewis' Vorticism, named after the movement's periodical Blast) and to "End of the Worldism" (possibly referring to Blasticism's Italian parent, Futurism).⁹⁰ Cubism was also specifically singled out in 1920 for unfavorable comment.⁹¹

Lethaby produced various aphorisms to express his attitude about contemporary art generally, such as: "...art has been made so precious...there is precious little of it." On the universality of the urge to create art, an urge supposedly suppressed by critics, Lethaby wrote: "Art is a natural human aptitude which has been explained almost out of existence."⁹²

Selected Examples From the Present

Concrete examples of good and bad modern-day architecture were occasionally offered by Lethaby and, not surprisingly, there were fewer in the "good" category. Webb's works were, of course, lauded as were Lutyens'. For example, in 1925 Webb's country house (1863) at Arisaig in Scotland was praised for its use of materials and Lethaby said of Webb's house of 1873 ("Joldwynds" Dorking): "humans might

⁸⁹ "The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby," 15 Jan., 1932, p. 132.

⁹⁰ "What Shall We Call Beautiful?" (1918), as found in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 159, orig. in the Hibbert Journal, 1 Apr., 1918 and "Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy..." (1920) as found in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 175. (Orig. publ. in the Hibbert Journal, June, 1920.)

⁹¹ "Exhibitionism at the Royal..." (1920), op.cit., p. 175. The earlier English Pre-Raphaelite painters Millais and Ford Maddox Brown of Morris' circle were favored by Lethaby over "other modern painters." Among sculptors one finds that Lethaby looked favorably on Rodin and not on the Hungarian sculptor Mestrovic.

⁹² These thoughts as presented in "The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby," op.cit., 22 Jan., 1932, p. 175.

live in it – a very difficult criterion for a modern dwelling.”⁹³ Certainly Webb’s example was to be followed in house design, not Le Corbusier’s. Lethaby did agree with Le Corbusier in 1929 that dwellings were, in effect, machines to live in but this meant something different to him.⁹⁴ Especially, houses were not to be boxes of steel as he seems to have thought Le Corbusier advocated.⁹⁵ Much of contemporary English house production Lethaby found unacceptable. Lethaby quoted Webb in 1925 as to the existence of various kinds of “artificial” (in the bad sense) classes of homes, including the “shoddy” examples of Victoria Street.⁹⁶ The idea of shoddiness as applied to contemporary work was brought up earlier (1917) by Lethaby when he observed that “as soon as our modern buildings are completed, or before, the annual charged for repairs begins.”⁹⁷

In 1921 another list of recent constructions, emphasizing the positive, had been offered. Webb’s work was mentioned; some of the others were:

- a) A large number of cottages put up under [government] housing schemes.
- b) Some factories (“fearless but tidy”).
- c) Albert Hall – “our best recent monumental architecture” (a tribute to the engineer, Francis Fowke, in the main).
- d) Parts of (but only parts) of the interior of the new wing of the British Museum.⁹⁸

⁹³ Orig. a series on Webb in The Builder (1925), as found in 1935 book version, Philip Webb, pp. 86 and 92. The word “modern,” like “mystery,” was utilized in Lethaby’s writings in a number of ways and used in this last quote to mean, contemptuously, the newly-built. At other times in Lethaby’s writing it meant what should be built. Some mention of Lethaby’s admiration for Webb’s work is included here because of the special relationship between Webb and Lethaby and because of Lethaby’s insistence that Webb’s work was particularly germane, among the latter’s contemporaries, to recent architectural activity. What Lethaby thought about the work of Webb’s contemporaries and older nineteenth century architects is in the next sub-section of this chapter.

⁹⁴ “Architecture as Engineering” (1929), op.cit., p. 252.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Orig. as 1925 series on Webb in The Builder, as found in the 1935 book version, Philip Webb, p. 121. Webb had grouped these in 1896 into two larger categories (the “natural” and the “non-natural”) which together made up the present “shoddy period.” (Ibid. Letter from Webb to Percy Windham, 20 July, 1886)

⁹⁷ “The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., p. 4.

⁹⁸ “Modernism and Design” (1921), Part X: “Planning, Composition and Block-Form,” The Builder, 7 Oct., p. 452.

In 1921 also, a bit more surprisingly, Lethaby praised the following London buildings all commissions of the firm of Mewes and Davis: the Motor Club (for its plan), the Ritz Hotel (amazingly, for its “lack of ornament”!) and the offices of the Morning Post.⁹⁹ Lethaby praised Bentley’s Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster in at least two languages.¹⁰⁰ He also praised the terrace front of the National Gallery in 1915 but had earlier (1893) panned the gallery itself.¹⁰¹

Engineering works, despite his admitted relative lack of knowledge about the procedures that produced them, sometimes occupied the highest places in Lethaby’s hierarchy of contemporary structures. In 1896 Lethaby asserted: “Waterloo Bridge... is quite the most splendid modern monument we have.” In 1911 in a list of laudable works, he cited only engineering ones—the Firth of Forth Bridge, the Nile Dam, and railroad bridges such as those at Morlaix in Brittany and across the Rhine at Cologne.¹⁰² Lethaby was not always so kind to the engineers themselves. He evaluated their recent works (1929) as “wriggles and boldness” and set these apart from what he believed to be their more praiseworthy nineteenth century counterparts.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ “Modernism and Design” (1921), Part IV: “French and English Education,” The Builder, 1 Apr., p. 410.

¹⁰⁰ “Architecture as Engineering-II,” The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301, and Lethaby Preface (2 pp.) to L’Eglise Abbatiale de Westminster et Ses Tombeaux (1913) by Paul Biver.

¹⁰¹ Negative: Leadwork (1893), op.cit., p. 35 and positive: “Modern German Architecture...” (1915), as found in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 103. Lethaby spoke out for the retention of such civic landmarks as the Nelson Column in the 1915 work as well.

¹⁰² “Of Beautiful Cities” (1896) as publ. in Art and Life... (1897), op.cit., p. 105. Material for the second sentence from Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., op.cit., pp. 193-194. The Tower Bridge of 1894 in London was cited, however as a bad work. Lethaby perhaps objected to cloaking the quite notable engineering achievements of this work in medieval raiments.

¹⁰³ “Architecture as Engineering” (1929), The Builder, 8 Feb., p. 301. Earlier in the same decade Lethaby made the statement (in 1925) that he hoped that the Morris-inspired reaction against misuse of machinery would continue. Perhaps he was heartened by the direction (some of it anyway) of the Design and Industries Association in England and the Deutscher Werkbund—Germany, like the moving away from making objects in imitation of hand-work. He surely must have been distressed by the displacement of crafts-workers as machines began to fill even more the needs of society. (As in Philip Webb, 1935, op.cit., p. 234; orig. from the 1925 series in The Builder.)

Lethaby criticized railroad stations as eyesores and complained that unsightly ads were affixed to houses; streets were untidy.¹⁰⁴ Underground (subway) station structures were described in 1917 as “an architecture of temporary shanties” and Edgware Road and Oxford Street (both in London) were singled out as aesthetic problems.¹⁰⁵ Citizens, with their indifferent attitude towards the built environment were to blame for all this, Lethaby thought, as were business interests, engineers and architects.

The State of Architectural Education

“[W]e maintain big institutions for crushing men’s heads,” Lethaby wrote in 1921.¹⁰⁶ Lethaby thought the current methods of training architects also needed improvement. In 1889 he complained that the various theories of design were not critically examined and specifically, that, as he termed it, the “old dogma of utilitarianism” was still being used, for which Pugin, Lethaby thought, provided the best architectural example.¹⁰⁷ He wrote in 1921: “we have been told for one hundred years that architecture as ‘application’ is all wrong” and ridiculed the idea of pilots and tank corpsmen coming back from World War I “to draw the orders for exams.”¹⁰⁸ Always returning to practical considerations, he opined: “when architecture is taught like this, no wonder the roof leaks.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴“Town Tidying” (1916), as found in Form in... (1922), op.cit., pp. 18 and 12. Orig. an address to the Arts and Crafts Society, Nov., 1916.

¹⁰⁵“The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁶Part X: “Planning, Composition and Block-Form,” The Builder, 7 Oct., 1921, p. 450. Lethaby’s views on architectural education will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter XIII.

¹⁰⁷“Of the ‘Motive’ in Architectural Design,” A.A. Notes, Vol. IV, No. 32, Nov. 1889, p. 23. Pugin was often treated favorably by Lethaby (in his 1925 series on Philip Webb, for example) but perhaps he had in mind in this instance a warmer, more human architecture that Pugin had provided.

¹⁰⁸Part X: “Planning, Composition and Block-Form,” The Builder (7 Oct., 1921), op.cit., p. 450.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

History and its Use and Misuse in the Present

...by looking on the arts of antiquity as so many styles offered for our inspection and imitation, we miss alike any proper understanding of the past or the present...¹¹⁰

But one could learn from the past, Lethaby believed. “History...makes the experience of the past available to us” he remarked in 1893.¹¹¹ One can draw “principles of treatment and method” from history.¹¹² “Greek and Gothic alike, Lethaby wrote in 1908: “teach that no great architecture can be the light and lax exercises of will and whim.” He suggested then that we pay attention to the overall chain of events in ancient times, not the details and further: “The problem which the study of Greek Art or Gothic Art opens before us is not properly what they did, but how they did it as a process”.¹¹³ In a comment from 1911 Lethaby suggested that one could learn from an analytical study of past use of building elements (walls, arches, etc.) and that doing so would help solve the “style dilemma.”¹¹⁴ Such study should lead, Lethaby said, to a system of classification which transcended time and space and would focus on questions of function. All this should supplant the current approach to historical architecture, one conducted in slavery to “names and categories.”¹¹⁵ Styles were still useful to classify the past, if not of use for the present, Lethaby noted in 1929.¹¹⁶ In 1917 Lethaby lauded Guadet’s emphasis, after the “mystical eloquence by which we have so long been dosed to sleep,” on studying the buildings of ancient Rome for

¹¹⁰“The Uses of Antiquity,” Part VII of “Modernism and Design,” *The Builder*, 1 July, 1921, p. 6. Lethaby went on to criticize the tearing down of Sir Christopher Wren’s house to erect a new, imitation “Jacobean” one (Ibid.).

¹¹¹*Leadwork* (1893), *op.cit.*, pp. 3.

¹¹²Ibid, pp. 4-5.

¹¹³“The Theory of Greek...” (1908), *op.cit.*, pp. 218 and p. 217.

¹¹⁴*Architecture*, *op.cit.*, as in 1955 ed., pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 2.

¹¹⁶“Architecture as Engineering” (1929), *The Builder*, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

the “strict rationality of their disposition and construction.”¹¹⁷ He added then also that it was that which made the works of antiquity noble.¹¹⁸

In the 1920s Lethaby again applauded the recent trend he noticed towards emphasizing Roman building methods and not the “orders.” He praised in this context the writings of Middleton, Choisy, and Rivoira.¹¹⁹

One more component of Lethaby’s criticism about the treatment of the past in his time should be noted—that concerning the loss of historical fabric. The threat in Lethaby’s time came as much from “restoration” as from demolition. Commenting in 1896 on Gothic architecture and Victor Hugo’s complaints about the restoration of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Lethaby said:

I know nothing more ironical than that sixty years after he [Hugo] described the “leprosy” (it is his words) of restoration which had disfigured the fair face of the great cathedral we should still be energetically pulling down or peeling the skin off the last examples of Gothic art.¹²⁰

Having attempted to convey some idea of Lethaby’s general point of view about architecturally-related questions in his own time, a similar procedure will be employed with an eye towards learning something of Lethaby’s general perspective on past architectural activity, beginning with a period very much interrelated to his mind (and no doubt everyone else). This is the earlier part of the century into which Lethaby was born. But before doing this, a few background comments about Lethaby as a historian of architecture and art will be offered.

¹¹⁷“The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), *op.cit.*, p. 1. In another place Lethaby wrote that: “Histories of the building art have too much ignored building and concentrated on styles” and “they have been chronological descriptions of appearances and effects with personal opinion or ‘taste’ thrown in.” (TS “Origins,” n.d., p. 2; with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.)

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁹“Architecture as Engineering” (1929), *The Builder*, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

¹²⁰“Of Beautiful Cities” (1896), as found in *Art and Life...* (1897), *op.cit.*, pp. 81-82.

Progress

The belief in the doctrine of “progress”—in this case meaning the belief that certain events follow each other in such a way so that the overall improvement in the human condition (or some aspect thereof)—pervaded the thoughts of a large number of writers on art and architecture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus the belief that modern architecture was superior to earlier architecture has colored many expressions of architectural theory. Furthermore, in a number of instances, it was believed that whatever process was involved in the attainment of “progress” would or could lend to even better things in the future. This attitude is evident in the writings of Roger Fry and Herbert Read, and later, in those of Nikolaus Pevsner, Lewis Mumford, and Siegfried Gideon, to name a few.

Lethaby showed himself to be aware of but skeptical of this way of thinking. Alfred H. Powell, in his introduction to a collection of excerpts from Lethaby’s writings (in 1957) provided a good example of Lethaby’s skepticism as to the possibility of “progress”: “this wretched taking of progress for granted will never do – surely there is a Divine doubt as well as a Divine discontent... The only idea I can conceive of progress (if there be progress!) is the larger use of reason for the better service of man.”¹²¹ But Lethaby, in his belief in the improbability (not to say perfectibility) of art and architecture, if only people would follow his “method” (however reliant on his own interpretation of the past) cannot himself be excluded from this category of believers in “progress.” Interpretations of what constitutes “progress” vary of course. For example, although it might be regarded as so by some, bringing railroads into the centers of old towns was not progress, nor was being able to reproduce miles of cast-iron Doric detailing by

¹²¹Scripts and Scraps (1957), op.cit., p. 9.

machine. Lethaby wrote in 1921 about the Industrial Revolution, which brought such changes as those just mentioned: “It was the...age of the easy doctrine of progress...”¹²²

Lethaby as a Student and Scholar of Past Architecture and Art

Lethaby was a diligent student of all past building. Any pronouncement he might make about the inter-relationship between past architectural work and that of his own day (and he was interested in discovering these), was founded upon a great amount of architectural-historical knowledge. No English architectural writer to that point must have known more about the architecture of the past than Lethaby in his later years. Professor D. Talbot Rice wrote in 1957 about Lethaby’s scholarship: “Many great names in the sphere of architecture and art studies occur to one, but were the choice to be put to me, the two names that would come first on my list would be those of the Austrian scholar Strzygowski and of the Englishman Lethaby.”¹²³

When Lethaby spoke of the “styles,” it was not commentary derived from a superficial study of nineteenth century pattern books nor was it the somewhat higher level of knowledge the well-trained architect of his day might be expected to possess. His involvement with the study of past architecture was life-long. Some of his knowledge was gained through academic activity and more in the course of his architectural employment.

Lethaby’s activities in association with societies like the SPAB and the Society of Antiquaries must also have facilitated a greater knowledge of the past, although the information he disseminated through these sources was also considerable. Also, Lethaby’s association in various contexts with Webb, Morris

¹²²Series on Webb in *The Builder* (1925), as found in the book version, Philip Webb (1935), p. 20. In some sense, then, Lethaby was not so much like his Socialist colleagues with respect to a fervent belief in the temporal perfectibility of Man. Lethaby did subscribe to another concept related to the progress idea—one which was well-subscribed in his time. This was that, instead of uninterrupted progress in Mankind’s development there were cycles and thus, periods when there was relatively higher attainment by Man generally in some areas. For Lethaby, one of the most important periods was the medieval one. (Lethaby’s comment on the “decline” of Greek civilization during the Hellenistic period in his article “Architecture as Form in Civilization” as repr. in *Form in...*, p. 8 (orig. publ. in the *London Mercury*, 1920). This view produced as a corollary, the idea of “cycles,” as man moves in and out of the most ideal periods; for Lethaby, a precedent one should consider for guidance was the medieval period.

¹²³“William Richard Lethaby, 1857-1931,” Section IV: “Scholarship and Writing,” *R.I.B.A. Journal* (1957), p. 222.

and the Pre-Raphaelites in contexts additional to the SPAB meetings must have supplied him with something more substantial than mere enthusiasm for medieval art. The recognition of his knowledge of medieval architecture was certainly a major component in his selection as Surveyor of Westminster Abbey and later as Surveyor for the cathedral at Rochester. His tenure in these positions without doubt led to a further enlargement of his knowledge of Gothic art.

Lethaby saw the architecture of the past first-hand through extensive travels in England and on the Continent, and through his diligent examination of architectural artifacts in the British Museum and other institutions. Sketches of medieval subjects figure prominently in his numerous sketchbooks.¹²⁴ In the years following his death, the collection of Lethaby's sayings published in The Builder was complemented by reproductions of his sketches, for example, the one of the Tour St. Aubin at St. Angers and the Tour des Anglaises at Chenonceaux. An R.I.B.A. exhibition in honor of Lethaby the year after his death (i.e. 1932) included his sketches of a Byzantine cross, the Gothic bell tower at Caen, timberhouses at Rouen and at Caen, and the Gothic portals of the cathedrals at Bourges and Vézelay. David Martin, in his thesis on Lethaby, mentioned that a number of the latter's sketches of Gothic buildings around Derby were published in The Building News in 1879.¹²⁵

Lethaby's interest in historical architecture is also shown in the large proportion of his publications dealing with this and the wide acceptance of his expertise in this genre is reflected in the volume of his publications. Even Lethaby's general architectural books (excepting the collection of his essays, Form in Civilization) are essentially historical in nature. Such is the case with Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891), Architecture, Nature and Magic (1956, originally published serially in The Builder, 1928) and Architecture (1911). Philip Webb (1935, originally published serially in The Builder 1925), a biography, fits into this group as well not only because of its treatment of Webb's career, but because of the

¹²⁴The 1881 sketchbook Lethaby kept for his travels occasioned by his winning of the Pugin Studentship prize at the Royal Academy, London, contains a particularly large proportion of sketches of French and English medieval subjects. Some sketches of medieval and classical subjects in larger format can also be found among Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple.

¹²⁵Also publ. in the same periodical that year (February 14) was Lethaby's drawing of a Jacobean house in Derby.

evaluations, Lethaby's included, of other prominent nineteenth century architects. Lethaby's publications specifically concerned with art/architectural-historical themes, like several of the general books just mentioned, reveal his particular interest in medieval studies. Among Lethaby's bound volumes focusing on the latter subject are: Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen (1906), Medieval Art (1909), London and Westminster Painters of the Middle Ages (1912), Westminster Abbey Re-examined (1925, previously published serially in The Builder in 1924), Medieval Paintings (1928), and among the articles published in periodicals one can find "Architect D Rogers' Cathedral of York," Archaeological Journal (Vol. LXXII) and "Medieval Paintings at Westminster," Proceedings of the British Academy (1927).¹²⁶ Lethaby's writings on medieval subjects also appeared as contributions in books by other authors, as in the case of his chapter on medieval architecture in C.J. Crump's The Legacy of the Middle Ages (1926).

In addition to the recognition Lethaby earned from writings on medieval subjects, he was known for his contributions to other sectors of art/architectural historical studies. His work dealing with Byzantine art in particular (for example, his monograph published in 1894 in collaboration with Harold Swainson on the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul) was recognized by such scholars as D. Talbot Rice who wrote regarding Lethaby and the Austrian historian, Stryzowski:

[T]hanks primarily to them not only that the merits of Byzantine art came to be appreciated in and for itself, but also that the role that the region had played in the development of art and architecture in the west came to be realized. Before they wrote there was no recognition of the latter subject...

After their books appeared, a whole new field of research was opened up, exemplified in England by the work of the Byzantine Exploration Fund, of which Lethaby was one of the keenest supporters.¹²⁷

Lethaby's interest in other areas of architecture and art history are represented by works such as: London Before the Conquest (1902), Greek building (1908), The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (1910) and

¹²⁶D. Talbot Rice found the first of these, Medieval Art (1904), to be the most important of Lethaby's "art-historical" writings, stating that: "the book stands out as a landmark" in this area. (D. Talbot Rice, in the 1949 rev. ed. of Lethaby's Medieval Art, 1909, p. 223.)

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 223.

Londinium and the Crafts (1923, originally published in The Builder, 1921). The Journal of Hellenic Studies contains a number of his contributions over a period of about two decades. For example, some titles are: “The Earlier Temple of Artemis at Ephesus” (1916), “The Parthenon” (1917), “Greek Lion Monuments” (1918) and “The West Pediment of the Parthenon” 1930.¹²⁸ The Builder is another rich repository for Lethaby’s historical writings, an number of which were later collected and published in book form. Some examples in this periodical (besides those on medieval topics just mentioned) are: “Greek Afternoons at the British Museum” (1920), “Pre-Hellenistic Architecture” (1926), “Parthenon Studies” (1929), “More Greek Studies” (1929), “Old Saint Paul’s” (1930) and “The Palace of Minos at Knossos” (1931). The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries and the Architectural Review, among other periodicals published Lethaby’s work on historical subjects also.¹²⁹

A View Backward to the Earlier Parts of the Nineteenth Century

Lethaby saw nineteenth century architecture as diverging from the path of science which Lethaby believed had gained greater importance and impact as that century had gone on. On the other hand, architecture, as Lethaby saw it, had ironically become more and more a matter of “taste” and “superstition.” Nineteenth century ‘tastemakers’ he said, had cooked up style copying (Greek and Gothic) to avoid unemployment.¹³⁰

In 1911, Lethaby characterized the period from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century as a “mixed effort to be Roman, Greek or Gothic.” This effort, he wrote, was lacking conviction and

¹²⁸Other contributions appear in 1913, 1928 and 1929.

¹²⁹See, for example, in the former “Early Christian and Byzantine Ivories in the British and the Victoria and Albert Museum” (1909) and “Early Christian Objects at the British, and Victoria and Albert Museum” (1911) and in the latter “Sancta Sophia” (1905) and “Inigo Jones” (1912). In addition to his publications, Lethaby spoke often on historical subjects, in the context of his education-related positions and his many other activities. No attempt at even a summary discussion of this has been made here although this is discussed in a general way as part of the material offered in Chapter XIII on Lethaby on architectural education. See Chapter I for a more general discussion of Lethaby’s publishing activity and the Bibliography Part A for more examples.

¹³⁰Orig. in the series on Webb by Lethaby in 1925 in The Builder, as found in the 1935 book version, Philip Webb, pp. 63-65.

furthermore, fell short of an earlier attempt along this line to bring back the past—the Renaissance.¹³¹ A more favorable view of this period (or rather, part of it) was given in 1925. Lethaby observed then that Man had been getting back, in the early nineteenth century to “more skillful ways of building.” Cited as evidence of this was the construction of some of London’s squares, some buildings at Bath and Brighton, some markets at Exeter, and some city [municipal?] buildings at Birmingham. Oxford in the 1830s, Lethaby said, contained works of “human art” which were “unspoilt” by commercial architecture. Then, alas, came the Battle of Styles – and finally an “outbreak of professional style tasters with the Neo-Classical Revival – back to Greece – copying Paris and New York.”¹³²

One of the mistakes of earlier “modern” times (late eighteenth/early nineteenth century) in Lethaby’s view (from 1911) was the supposition that the key to medieval architecture was in its forms, proportions, and details – leading to the belief that one could build a “clever adaptation in the spirit of the original, with planned ‘irregularities.’”¹³³ Architects thought “they could supply thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth century buildings at demand.”¹³⁴ The flaw in this thinking, to Lethaby’s mind, was in believing that if the appearance of medieval work was attained, the essence would be there also. From the 1850s on, it appeared to Lethaby that there ensued a “still greater anarchy of style” with “Greek and Egyptian tombs, Dutch houses, Byzantine churches [and], a Renaissance of Wren’s Renaissance.”¹³⁵

¹³¹ Architecture (1911), p. 183. There is a related comment by Lethaby from 1921 about “the miserable imbecilities of ‘Gothic’ and ‘classic design.’” (Part IX of “Modernism and Design”: “Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture,” The Builder, 2 Sept., 1921, p. 289.)

¹³² Orig. in the series on Webb by Lethaby in 1925 in The Builder, as found in 1935 book version, Philip Webb, p. 65 and p. 1. It is not too clear what Lethaby had in mind as to the English copying New York; possibly he meant the use of steel skeleton construction. Daniel Burnham of Chicago, who had pioneering experience with such things, was called in, c. 1907, as consultant in the construction of Selfridge’s new department store in London.

¹³³ Architecture (1911), as in 1955 ed., pp. 183-184.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 183. In 1917, Lethaby also noted that the Queen Anne style was a fad in his day. (“Architecture and Modern Life,” 1917, as in Form in..., 1922, pp. 110-111.)

Lethaby pointed out in his study of Webb in 1925 that in the mid-1860s the Gothic Revival “appeared to offer the promise of regeneration of the arts.”¹³⁶ But it turned out, as he wrote earlier in the decade: “Victorian Gothic...was as purely an imitative affair as the classic before and after it...workmen copied triglyphs and metopes, then crockets and cusps.”¹³⁷ Lethaby noted in 1925 that in the last decades of the nineteenth century Gothic Revival architectural work was displaced by another “whim” style (a resurgent classicizing mode, like the Italian Renaissance style which it supplanted) just as a tendency toward “reasonable building” had emerged.¹³⁸ Lethaby charged in 1929 that mid-nineteenth century architects had become attracted to “stained glass, upholstery and perspective design” rather than to more legitimate building concerns.¹³⁹

Lethaby’s view of the effects of the industrial revolution depended on whether the earlier parts of the nineteenth century or more recent times were being discussed. Earlier mass production (c. 1815) was good, Lethaby noted about a century later.¹⁴⁰ But he was as disillusioned about later developments as any of his Arts and Crafts brethren. Men, Lethaby said, had skills and tools until 1800. “Now all that [is] gone in the blast furnace of profit!”¹⁴¹ The value of machine production had changed from earlier days – workers now became mere “machine tenders,” he wrote in 1917.¹⁴²

Building materials had not utilized well in the nineteenth century, in Lethaby’s opinion. In 1893 he wrote of their degradation and charged that whole crafts based around a particular material (citing leadworking as an example) had been “killed off.” Plumbing, he said a year earlier, was “now a term of derision” though once, citing accounts from Viollet-le-duc, plumbers had similar status to that of

¹³⁶As in Philip Webb (1935), p. 30, orig. 1925 in The Builder.

¹³⁷Part XII of “Modernism and Design”: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” 2 Dec., 1921, p. 750.

¹³⁸As in Philip Webb (1935), op.cit., pp. 64-65. Orig. publ. as a series in The Builder (1925).

¹³⁹“Architecture as Engineering-II,” The Builder, 8 Feb., p. 301.

¹⁴⁰“Design and Industry” (1915), as found in Form in... (1922), p. 65.

¹⁴¹Scraps and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 23. Orig. date of words by Lethaby not given.

¹⁴²“The Foundation in Labour” (1917), orig. in the Highway (March, 1917), as found in Form in... (1922), p. 221.

goldsmiths. Plumbing had “reached remarkable development [in England]” and it was only with the present (nineteenth) century “that it has been stamped out by the surveyor architect who now specified a number from a trade catalog.”¹⁴³

Specific Nineteenth Century Architects

Another way to further one’s understanding of Lethaby’s views on nineteenth century architecture is to notice how he appraised the architects who were working then. In his series on Philip Webb in issues of The Builder in 1925 Lethaby offered thumbnail biographical characterizations of those architects he thought worth noting in the context of nineteenth century British architectural activity. Occasionally one encounters evaluative remarks on these men in other places in his writings as well, but Lethaby did not offer much specific comment on nineteenth century practitioners who did not reside in the British Isles. Most architects who were mentioned seem to have been brought up for a didactic purpose. Some Lethaby described unfavorably, but when he named specific people he seems to have tried to focus on some salutary aspect of their professional activity. There may have been a few that Lethaby considered significant or influential but whom he was so unsympathetic that no mention was made.

Pugin is the key figure in Lethaby’s comments on architects of the earlier nineteenth century but his remarks from the 1890s about that architect are more negative than later ones. A reference made in 1890 has Pugin leading other architects in the “wrong direction.”¹⁴⁴ This is clarified some by another, in 1897, which described Pugin as the head of one of two major schools of copyists – the “medieval” group.¹⁴⁵ Later writing by Lethaby credited Pugin with flashes of insight, and as one not afraid of “hard building facts (1925).”¹⁴⁶ Pugin was almost an “early modern” and recognized the importance of the “crafts,”

¹⁴³Leadwork (1893), p. 3 and “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman” (1892), as publ, in Architecture: A Profession... (1892), op.cit., p. 151.

¹⁴⁴“Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades,” Journal of the Royal Society, 23 July, 1897, p. 853.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶From Lethaby’s 1925 series on Webb in The Builder, as found in book form in 1935, op.cit., p. 65.

Lethaby wrote in 1925. Also, he was praised for taking the trouble to study the old buildings of England in his True Principles of Painted Christian Architecture (first published 1841) if not in his actual works. Lethaby implied that Pugin might have been capable of more worthy things and, like Ruskin, Garbutt or Fergusson, tried to emphasize “building” in architecture and in his writings.¹⁴⁷

Another major figure in early nineteenth century English architecture who was given mixed reviews by Lethaby was Sir John Soane. The classicizing efforts of Soane and later C.R. Cockerell (who succeeded Soane as Architect to the Bank of England) were not appreciated by Lethaby, although the engineering aspects of Soane’s work were.¹⁴⁸ One of the Wyatts is unfavorably referred to in his capacity as Surveyor to Westminster Abbey but it is unclear who exactly, since both Benjamin Dean Wyatt (1775-1850) and James Wyatt (1746-1813) both served in this capacity.¹⁴⁹

Of the architects of the later nineteenth century, Webb occupied a unique place for Lethaby. He wrote in 1925 that “every piece of building work done in England during the last generation which has any life in it” if not the direct attempt of some practical builder “derives in some way from the experiments of Webb.” Lethaby credited only Webb among nineteenth century architects with understanding Ruskin’s theory of “ethical dignity” in architecture. He further wrote of Webb that he tried to make buildings pleasant without pretense and was further credited with “redeeming cast-iron as a material.”¹⁵⁰

One interesting aspect of Lethaby’s commentary on late nineteenth century architects is his grouping of them into two categories – “Softs” and “Hards” – to represent for him the two major tendencies in the architecture of their time. The “Hards” were the good group, standing for careful use of

¹⁴⁷Orig. a series on Webb in The Builder; as found in Philip Webb (1935), op.cit., pp. 65-66.

¹⁴⁸Part IX of “Modernism and Design”: “Building Commonplaces...” (op.cit.), The Builder, 2 Sept., 1921), p. 289. Lethaby referred to the architect Cockerell’s nineteenth century “Greek” buildings in an unsympathetic way. (Architecture, 1911, as in 1955 ed., p. 183 and in Philip Webb, 1935 [orig. 1925], p. 85.)

¹⁴⁹Also, a Wyatt is mentioned unfavorably by Lethaby in 1897 in “Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades,” Journal of the Royal Society, XIV, 1897, p. 853.)

¹⁵⁰All material in this paragraph from Lethaby’s study of Philip Webb in The Builder (1925), as found in Philip Webb (1935), op.cit., p. 234.

materials and experimentation, among other things, while the “Softs” indulged in “the Styles,” “paper designs,” exhibitions and competitions.¹⁵¹

William Butterfield was mentioned as a representative of the “Hards” and Sir G.G. (Giles Gilbert) Scott, the “Softs.” Scott was described, with veiled sarcasm, as “The Great Architect” and a big “restorer” of the type precipitating in reaction the formation of the SPAB. Lethaby said that Scott “proved the impossibility of being a Gothic architect” in the present day. Butterfield was, on the other hand, admired by Lethaby. Although Butterfield also worked in the Gothic idiom, Lethaby thought that he “built the most ‘possible’ buildings erected with the name ‘revived’ Gothic.” But Lethaby believed that Gothic architecture could not be recreated even by such a conscientious and perceptive architect as Butterfield. Butterfield showed the positive influence of Pugin, Lethaby believed, in his concentration on practical matters in building and Lethaby admired Butterfield’s commitment (as with the other “Hards”) to workmanship and experimentations rather than to (as in the case of the “Softs”) “imitation, style ‘effect,’” paper designs and exhibitions.” Lethaby further lauded Butterfield’s avoidance of competitions, and an affiliation with the Royal Academy.¹⁵²

Like his almost-master Butterfield, Lethaby’s actual one, Norman Shaw, was treated favorably. Lethaby felt that his former employer and other employees well and also believed that Shaw was influenced by G. E. Street whom Lethaby deeply admired.¹⁵³ Shaw’s Lowther Lodge (1872 ff) was cited as showing a close study of Webb’s work. Other architects among those accorded favorable treatment in Lethaby’s writings were Gilbert Scott II, John Francis Bentley, Alfred Waterhouse and John D Sedding. Scott (1839-1897) and Bentley (1839-1902) were both identified as men of “high gift.” Lethaby noted that Bentley was an admirer of Webb and called him a “builder-architect” in his own right. Bentley’s Byzantinesque Roman Catholic Cathedral in Westminster was particularly admired by Lethaby who

¹⁵¹From Lethaby’s study on Philip Webb in The Builder (1925), as repr. in the book Philip Webb (1935), from pages, as presented: 84, 18, 191 and 69.

¹⁵²Ibid, pp. 67-70.

¹⁵³Philip Webb (1935), op.cit., p. 75. (Orig. from 1925 in The Builder.)

pronounced it a sound, “modern” structure. Like Morris, Webb and Street, John Dando Sedding (1838-1891) had been in Street’s office. Lethaby appreciated the fact that he had employed good craftsmen, had worked in the crafts himself, and was not concerned with “style,” “design” and “competitions.” Sedding “saw as few of his time that architecture was workmanship, not paper.”¹⁵⁴ Last, among the nineteenth century architects unqualifiedly praised by Lethaby was Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) who still, Lethaby said, though a Gothic Revivalist, “aimed at a measured medieval modernism” (modernism expressed through but constrained by the Gothic Revival mode) through his “able” planning and organizational skills and his emphasis on “building.” Waterhouse was, Lethaby said, an “able constructor” whose “manly” Manchester Town Hall in particular, deserved praise.¹⁵⁵

Those nineteenth century architectural personalities more ambivalently assessed by Lethaby include G.E. Street (1824-1881) whose office had been an important training ground for other key practitioners like Webb and Shaw. Lethaby saw Street as a man of potential, but a potential not realized in the way Lethaby would wish. Street, so Lethaby thought, might have reformed English building customs had he not let the “vain hopes” of the Gothic Revival guide him. He explained that Webb left Street’s office because “he saw that modern medievalism was an open contradiction.” Lethaby ambivalently assessed Street as an “able and [but?] self-convinced church architect ‘in the Gothic Style.’ ” He said Street was “too much an imitator” who included in his range of activities the lamentable activity “restoring.” Still, unlike Scott who also maintained a large office, Lethaby was pleased to report that Street did his own work instead of merely acting as chief broker for the work which came in.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 79. Lethaby also (p. 80, op.cit.) singled out two books by J.D. Sedding for praise: Garden Craft (1891) and Art and Handicraft (1893).

¹⁵⁵Information in this paragraph all from Lethaby’s study of Philip Webb, published serially in The Builder (1925) as repub. in the book Philip Webb (1935), pp. 13, 17-18, 72, 74, 79-80. Lethaby called Waterhouse a “semi-modern,” especially in regard to his large buildings. (Op.cit., p. 74.)

¹⁵⁶Material in this paragraph is all drawn from Lethaby’s series on Philip Webb in The Builder (1925), as found in 1935 book ed., op.cit., pages as presented: p. 13, 17-18, 72, 74, 79-80. Lethaby mentioned, by way of negative nuance, that Street did “much restoring” as architect for the Diocese of Oxford. (Ibid., p. 13.)

Generally, Lethaby felt that many nineteenth century architects went in the wrong direction in trying to revive Gothic “style” when they should have been perfecting a “science of modern building.” Shaw’s partner Eden Nesfield (1835-1888) possessed some good qualities, Lethaby thought, such as not being subservient to clients, but was too concerned with the pictorial aspects of his work. He described Edward W. Godwin (1833-1886) as having an “amazing gift for ‘designing.’ ” This appraisal, considering the source, cannot be considered unqualified praise but Lethaby thought it to Godwin’s credit that he had known Webb and suggested Godwin must have been influenced by him. Lethaby’s teacher at London’s Royal Academy, Richard Phené Spiers (1838-1916) was described as a man who, although Paris-trained (in the idiom of Beaux Arts Classicism) followed Shaw (who, like Webb, was a suitable architectural beacon).¹⁵⁷

Also mentioned by Lethaby were William Burges (1827-1881) and George F. Bodley (1827-1907) who, like many others of their time, worked in the Gothic Revival style. Of the two, Lethaby was kinder to Burges whom he viewed as a medievalist with “some sense of construction,” but who never-the-less looked on architecture as “play-acting.” Bodley carried “working in a style” to the ultimate and “could do Gothic flavors to a miracle.” His churches were “monuments to taste.” Besides Wyatt, two more of Lethaby’s predecessors as Surveyor to Westminster Abbey were commented upon. John L. Pearson (1817-1897) was labeled as a “master of effects” who could produce “remarkable essays in ‘design.’ ” Lethaby criticized his work at the Abbey directly. J.T. Michellthwaite (1843-1906), Lethaby’s immediate predecessor as Surveyor was regarded more favorably; Lethaby said he had a “high sympathy for the ‘building view’ of architecture.”¹⁵⁸

Occasionally, Lethaby would comment on the value of particular nineteenth century buildings, particularly those in London. He thought of the Crystal Palace, as did Ruskin, as an infelicitous turning

¹⁵⁷Material in this paragraph is all drawn from Lethaby’s series on Philip Webb in The Builder (1925), pages as presented: p. 63, 78, 200 and 233.

¹⁵⁸All material in this paragraph is drawn from Lethaby’s series on Webb, as publ. in The Builder (1925), as found in the repr. of this in Philip Webb (1935), pages as presented: p. 72, 73, 70 and 80.

point in architecture.¹⁵⁹ Pugin's and Barry's Houses of Parliament were commended for the siting and Lethaby conceded that in mass it was impressive. However, he said it was wanting in intellectual quality and "expression."¹⁶⁰ Perhaps overdone also, as Lethaby wrote that "by mere leaving out" it might have been much better.¹⁶¹ The Houses of Parliament were not true architecture to Lethaby, however, although he allowed, referring to these buildings and like works: "I am ready to confer that sham architecture – some little of it – may have a kind of interest, a pathetic interest, really, of its own."¹⁶²

Engineering in the Nineteenth Century

If a building's "style" was among the most expendable attributes of a nineteenth century building in Lethaby's eyes, its "engineering" was among the most essential. The most "real and vital" work of the period Lethaby said in 1929 preserved some engineering element. But as he pointed out in his most sustained discussion on the general topic of architecture (the 1911 book of the same name), "civil engineers [in the nineteenth century] broke away from the general art of building to the detriment of both."¹⁶³ He observed in 1929 that the separation of engineering from architecture was "a very recent phenomenon."¹⁶⁴

Both architecture and engineering, in Lethaby's view had degenerated, beginning about the middle of the nineteenth century; both became "professionalized" and had experienced an accompanying sterility which Lethaby said resulted from the exclusion of the "amateur" from the building process.¹⁶⁵ A related issue involved Lethaby's belief that the engineer had "sold out" to business interests; he became, by the

¹⁵⁹Leadwork (1893), p. 1.

¹⁶⁰Part XII of "Modernism and Design": "Architectural Theory and Building Practice," The Builder, 2 Dec., 1921, p. 751.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 750. A similar comment was made about the Palace at Westminster in the same source: "A little less 'style' would have done just as well." (*Ibid.*).

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³Architecture (1911), 1955 ed., p. 182.

¹⁶⁴"Architecture as Engineering-II," The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*

mid-nineteenth century, “a cog in the machinery of steam expansion, a willing agent of company exploitation for dividends.”¹⁶⁶ As Lethaby put it a few years earlier: “In England, by the ungoverned action of ruling ideas, theories of supply and demand and the like, the engineer became a closely attached servant of the industrial expansion...a willing agent of exploitation for profit.”¹⁶⁷

During the last half of the nineteenth century, Lethaby wrote in 1929: “engineers hired themselves out to provide any kind of silly ramshackle instruments.”¹⁶⁸ This led, he said, to such horrors as “the bringing railroads into old cities, the building of Charing Cross and other bridges, and tawdry marine pier, all the “lowest intellectual work of man.”¹⁶⁹ These works were all “without civic dignity, recognition of land beauty, or a reverence for their own great art, the art of pure structure.”¹⁷⁰ Things were better across the Channel, Lethaby thought. He wrote that engineers in France, Switzerland, and Germany had conserved “a better tradition of their noble [engineering] art.”¹⁷¹ One could see there numerous works of “high interest.”¹⁷²

Lethaby made known, however, his appreciation of the early nineteenth century engineers and engineering innovators in Britain; I.K. Brunel, for example, “stood for a sense of order and propriety since lost to engineers.”¹⁷³ Joseph Paxton was mentioned favorably, despite Lethaby’s negative feelings about the Crystal Palace. Others accorded favorable acknowledgement were Thomas Telford (1757-

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷“The Engineer’s Art,” Architecture, July, 1925, p. 120.

¹⁶⁸“Architecture as Engineering-II,” The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

¹⁶⁹Ibid. See, for example, Lethaby’s “Oxford Before the Railway,” the first part of Lethaby’s biography of Webb, orig. from 1925.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid.

1834), George Stephenson (1819-1905), John Rennie (1761-1821), Ralph Dodd (c. 1756-1822), and from a bit later, Francis Fowke (an army engineer, 1823-1868).¹⁷⁴

Among nineteenth century engineering works Lethaby praised was the scheme (1840) for a tunnel under the Thames by J. Brunel because of its “simplicity.” Some of the early suspension bridges Lethaby called “clear and direct solutions to problems which may interest a human creature.”¹⁷⁵ Royal Albert Hall, designed by the engineer Fawke, was compared favorably with another London structure of the times, the Albert Memorial. Lethaby termed the latter that “well-known essay in the Gothic Revival style.”¹⁷⁶ He compared favorably the work of the engineers at St. Pancras Station (1863-65), especially the roof over the trains by Rowland M. Ordish (1824-1886) and William H. Barlow (1812-1902) to the hotel in front by the architect G.G. Scott.¹⁷⁷

As for nineteenth century artists, those with which Lethaby was most closely connected, the Pre-Raphaelites, received the most attention and the most complimentary remarks. Lethaby wrote in 1908 that they “altered the whole course of English Art” – an observation perhaps too magnanimous.¹⁷⁸ Sir John Everett Millais (1829-1896) and Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893) both were lauded. Lethaby described Millais as one of the few really good (recent) painters and called Brown’s Christ Washing St. Peter’s Feet “the finest of modern English religious pictures.”¹⁷⁹ Lethaby, like his contemporaries, appreciated the exaggerated sentimentality express in the work of a number of English painters in the late nineteenth century. Brown’s Christ elicited the comment: “If you feel it, it will be in rapture, not sensation – such a

¹⁷⁴Misc. sources in Lethaby’s writings, including letters and sketchbooks. Most of these men (or their work) is commented on in a favorable context, for example, in “Architecture as Engineering-II,” 8 Feb., 1929, The Builder, p. 301. Lethaby’s reference to Rennie may either be to John Rennie (1761-1821), a leading engineer in the first half of the century or his famous son, Sir John Rennie (1794-1874), a brother-in-law of C.R. Cockerell responsible for such large works as the Royal Navy Victualling Yard at Stonehouse (1826-1835).

¹⁷⁵“Architecture as Engineering-II,” 8 Feb., 1929, The Builder, p. 301. Of later nineteenth century bridges, Lethaby suggested that the Firth of Forth Bridge in Scotland had this “large scientific sense.”

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸“The Theory of Greek Architecture,” 8 Feb., 1908, R.I.B.A. Journal, p. 219.

¹⁷⁹Scripts and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 40. Orig. context and date of Lethaby’s words not given.

difference!”¹⁸⁰ Brown’s painting Work also received praise. In 1920, Lethaby said of it: “No nineteenth century sermon was as prophetic.”¹⁸¹ Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti also were written of favorably.¹⁸²

Among other English nineteenth century painters, William Turner (1775-1851) was described favorably and James Whistler’s Peacock Room was commended.¹⁸³ Lethaby also defended Whistler’s Nocturnes.¹⁸⁴ Sculptors from the period are not mentioned often, but one of them, Alfred Stevens (1818-1875), was described as “the greatest of our designer sculptors.”¹⁸⁵ However, considering Lethaby’s negative views on “design” as practiced in the arts in Stevens’ time, the foregoing appraisal may not be so complimentary. Foreign nineteenth century painters and sculptors are seldom mentioned by name in Lethaby’s writings.¹⁸⁶

Lethaby’s Views on Pre-Nineteenth Century Architectural Developments and the Implications of These on his Theory of Architecture—General Observations

To gain insight into Lethaby’s view of architectural developments before the century in which he was born, a problem similar to that attending the study of his perspective on later activity presents itself—that is, there is no extended historical account by Lethaby to which one can turn. His popular work of 1911, Architecture, perhaps comes closest although, while chronologically arranged, it is really more a

¹⁸⁰Ibid. This may be partially a criticism of later developments Lethaby observed in painting, the work of Van Gogh for example.

¹⁸¹“Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy...” (1920), as repr. in Form in ..., (1922), p. 180.

¹⁸²Lethaby, in “Apprenticeship and Education” (1910), as repr. in Form in ... (1922), p. 142, referred to Burne-Jones as a “modern master.” Also, one of Lethaby’s published drawings for the Architectural Illustration Society, “The Beryl Shrine,” is derived from Rossetti’s poem, Rosemary. (20 Jan., 1888 in The Architect.)

¹⁸³Re: Whistler: House Painting—Ancient and Modern, 1915, pamphlet, p. 3 (Lethaby archives at Barnstaple). Whistler’s dates: 1834-1903.

¹⁸⁴“Ruskin: Defeat and Victory,” address to the Arts and Crafts Society, April 1919, as repr. in Form in ... (1922), p. 186.

¹⁸⁵“Cast Iron and Its Treatment for Artistic Purposes,” Journal of the Society of Arts, 14 Feb., 1890, p. 273.

¹⁸⁶Corot was referred to in rather neutral terms in one of Lethaby’s manuscripts at Barnstaple, one labeled “Aesthetics and Morals,” n.d., not paginated; probably from the late 1920s or very early 1930s.

collection of Lethaby's selected judgments about each period and the lessons to be learned from each than it is a historical account in the more conventional sense. One can also examine his chapter-length discussions in typescript, "Medieval Architecture" and "Renaissance and Modern" for example, as well as brief historical overviews that appeared prefatorily in his other works.¹⁸⁷ These are similar in approach to what was offered in Architecture. In the course of various other writings Lethaby would occasionally include some brief comment indicative of his conceptual view of past developments. Reviewing material of the various kinds just described, one can obtain some useful information as to Lethaby's perspective on architectural events before 1800.

Lethaby believed that the past, or rather lessons appropriately drawn from it, could be useful to modern society. Generally, he noted in 1921, the past was useful in inspiring "reverence," "race pride" and a "sense of folk ancestry." It offered "refreshment of spirit."¹⁸⁸

More specifically about architecture, Lethaby in 1921 stressed that the main strength of successful work in the past was that its producers lived in the present. Looking back too much was not advisable.¹⁸⁹ In the same 1921 article series he called attention to the particularity of an architectural work – how it was the outcome of specialized circumstances; cathedrals represented "exactly to a year the religion, the romance, the culture of the time which shaped them."¹⁹⁰ This old work, Lethaby observed in 1924, was done with "local understanding in local ways."¹⁹¹ Similarly, he observed elsewhere, that all living arts were "folk customs with their roots in the soil" and that they expressed the "common will of the

¹⁸⁷The pieces in TS form are at Barnstable. It is unclear whether they are related to published works or if they were to be delivered in spoken form.

¹⁸⁸The material in this paragraph all drawn from Lethaby's series "Modernism and Design" in The Builder, Part VIII: "The Uses of Antiquity (1 July, 1921), pp. 6-7.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, Part I: "Books or Buildings," 7 Jan., 1921, p. 31.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, Part VII: "The Uses of Antiquity," 1 July, 1921, p. 6.

¹⁹¹"Architecture, Design, Education," (1924), R.I.B.A.J., p. 74 (letter as publ., relating to International Congress on Architectural Education).

community.” Architecture had been, at least, “a compound of custom and experiment, of superstition and ceremony...”¹⁹²

Lethaby wrote in 1925 that learning about old art should teach that every manner of building belongs only to its own day.¹⁹³ Great things in the building arts were accomplished through a process which continually changed the end product. The process entailed “a tide of development, a chain of living thought, [and] unceasing experiment.”¹⁹⁴ All vital schools of building, Lethaby said a decade earlier, “didn’t theorize, they built” and instinct played a major role.¹⁹⁵ “Theory,” Lethaby believed, should be de-emphasized in the process of creating architecture, but he did suggest, in connection with the writing of histories of architecture, that it would be an improvement if the word was used to direct thought inward rather than toward outward appearances.¹⁹⁶ “Aesthetics” like “theory” were downplayed by Lethaby. He remarked in 1908 that aesthetic agreeableness had less to do than we think with any great school of building.¹⁹⁷ He also observed that ancient buildings “were not [originally] regarded aesthetically...but as part of the land and of man...they formed a chain of continuous existence [and were]...growths from the soil rather than products of will and artifice.”¹⁹⁸ Lethaby found the continuity of development to be an important attribute of past architecture. In some remarks on medieval architecture, he noted doubtingly: “We have divided up the fast-flowing stream [of past schools of art] into [synthetic] sections to which the names of ‘styles’ have been given.”¹⁹⁹ An on-going unity in the architectural experience is a theme

¹⁹²These last three quoted passages from the TS “Medieval Architecture” at Barnstaple, pp. 1-3.

¹⁹³From the series on Webb in The Builder (1925) as repr. in the book Philip Webb (1935), p. 157.

¹⁹⁴Part X of “Modernism and Design”: “Planning, Composition and Block-Form,” 7 Oct., 1921, p. 450.

¹⁹⁵Architecture (1911), as found in the 1955 ed., p. 180. This refusal to grant theory a major role in past architecture is one element which gives credence to Sir Reginald Blomfield’s observation that Lethaby’s view of the past was “unrealistic.” (“W.R. Lethaby-An Impression and a Tribute,” R.I.B.A.J., 20 Feb., 1932, p. 3.

¹⁹⁶TS “Renaissance and Modern,” n.d., p. 4, with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.

¹⁹⁷“The Theory of Greek Architecture” R.I.B.A.J., 8 Feb., 1908, p. 215.

¹⁹⁸Scraps and Scraps, (1956), op.cit., p. 18. Orig. source in Lethaby’s writing and date not given.

¹⁹⁹TS “Medieval Architecture” (n.d.), p. 3, Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.

Lethaby expressed in various ways. In 1891 he observed that architectural histories lay emphasis on the differences between modes of building but that “in the far larger sense all architecture is one.”²⁰⁰

Lethaby saw old architecture as essentially different from contemporary work not only in circumstance but in kind; it was, he said, “custom freely interpreted by little masters who were of the same class as the executants.”²⁰¹ Architects of old, unlike present ones, were depicted as not separated from (remote from) the artisan.

In one of his earliest writings (1891) Lethaby objected to what he said was the usual practice of writing the history of architecture as the development of buildings with an emphasis on utilitarian concerns. He claimed that such an approach was not adequate.²⁰²

In his article “The Theory of Greek Architecture” (1908), Lethaby questioned both theories of universal proportions and the idea that there could be only one possible solution, first commenting on the relationship of the Greek temple and other objects to the ontological beliefs of the time::

To the ancient mind, the thing made was only worthy to exist insofar as it followed its proper laws of being. The well-proportioned temple had reality, it embodied law; it was an approximation of the absolute type...

...the Parthenon [for example] was not designed, it was embodied, found out, revealed... [but, this way of doing things, Lethaby said, was] only one of an infinite number of possible starting points... [He added a little later] I can see no ground...for any of the assumptions [on which the construction was based].²⁰³

Lethaby’s main objection to the ancient Greek theory of proportion was that it was supposed to have a universal, timeless “rightness.” He continued: “I do not see that a tree is likely to be more of a tree or even more agreeable to the eye for being twice as high as it is broad...The tree is proportioned to its kind,

²⁰⁰Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891), as found in 1975 repr., op.cit., pp. 2-3. Or similarly, that the various schools of past art were but “different manifestations” of the same thing. (“The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby,” The Builder,), 8 Jan., 1932, p. 53. Orig. date and source of Lethaby’s words not given.)

²⁰¹Lethaby’s letter “Architecture, Design, Education” publ. in R.I.B.A.J., (1924), op.cit., p. 74.

²⁰²Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891), as found in the 1975 repr., op.cit., p. 1.

²⁰³“The Theory of Greek Architecture” (1908), op.cit., p. 215.

age, soil, climate, the rains and wind...”²⁰⁴ But here Lethaby makes the equally unprovable point that what is true of nature can be used legitimately in an analogy about architecture.²⁰⁵

Despite the foregoing reservations about “universals,” Lethaby did believe in them to some extent. There was, he said, a kind of “classic” which could emerge under the right conditions, at any time. In 1908 Lethaby said that a phase of Gothic work in England (for example Cistercian abbeys) as well as northern French cathedrals “notwithstanding all the unlikeliness of the forms, approach very near to the classic spirit.”²⁰⁶ One would think then, that ancient Rome would certainly offer something “classic” but Lethaby later stated: “The special spirit of Rome was for herself, not all time.”²⁰⁷

The concept of cycles of development in art is another notion which appealed to Lethaby, as it did to his English contemporaries, Roger Fry and Clive Bell. That “quality” is the “ordinate” (or “amplitude”) for these cycles (in the thinking of all three men) is not made quite so clear in Lethaby’s writing but it was implied when he stated that every great school of art moved from “barbaric” to the “classical.”²⁰⁸ A related notion of Lethaby’s was that one style begat another: “Behind every style of architecture there is an earlier style in which the germ of every form is to be found.”²⁰⁹ Lethaby wrote also of particular periods in history of “high-strung concentrations.” Perhaps these are to be related the height of a sine-type curve denoting, for Lethaby, artistic development through history.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴Ibid, p. 215-216.

²⁰⁵The relationship between nature and architecture has been explained in many ways, one of the most direct being Laugier’s idea of the tree bent to form a hut.

²⁰⁶“The Theory of Greek Architecture” (1908), op.cit., p. 218.

²⁰⁷“The Spirit of Rome and Our Modern Problem in Architecture” (Jan., 1917), Vol. XLI, Architectural Review, p. 2. Lethaby also stated, in giving a short definition of art, that it was universal (“The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby—Lethaby and the Moderns,” The Builder, 15 Jan., 1932, p. 132, orig. source in Lethaby’s writing and date not given).

²⁰⁸Architecture (1911), as in 1955 ed., p. 60. Perhaps this is a permutation of a statement by Bernard Berenson whom Lethaby quoted in 1908: “No Art can be classic unless it has been also archaic.” (“The Theory of Greek...,” 1908, op.cit., p. 217).

²⁰⁹Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891), as found in 1975 repr., op.cit., p. 2.

²¹⁰“The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., p. 4.

Pre-Medieval Times—Egypt and Greece

“To a degree, all architecture is an Egyptian art.”²¹¹

Lethaby was willing to subscribe to the idea in 1911 that, in a basic way, Egyptians had invented architecture.²¹² His view that success in architectural activity depended on closeness to everyday life seemed to him to be substantiated by what is known of the earliest civilizations. The raising of the pyramids, Lethaby argued in 1908, was possible because the artist found support in “ordinary life, common needs, and the sympathies of his fellows.”²¹³ But there was an important difference between the past (at least the distant past) and the present. This was, he wrote in 1891, that all early architecture was sacred, “bound up with people’s thoughts about God and the universe.”²¹⁴ One gets the feeling that Lethaby believed that an “inevitable” development was involved when reading what he wrote in this early essay—that it was a “necessary phase” that architecture in early days had to correspond to an “idea of the world.”²¹⁵ The theme that scholarship and learning are the enemies of true architecture was applied by Lethaby to even the oldest cultures. Craftsmanship in great civilizations like those of ancient Greece and Egypt was destroyed, he believed, as a consequence of scholarship. In the cases of Egypt, he said, “some dead hand seems to have been laid on the once free spirit of the people.”²¹⁶

Lethaby subscribed to the generally accepted view that the architectural ideas of ancient Egypt had spread to Crete and from there to Mycenae to form the foundations of Greek building.²¹⁷ In regard to the

²¹¹*Architecture* (1911), as per 1955 ed., *op.cit.*, p. 47.

²¹²*Ibid.* In a TS at Barnstaple, “Renaissance and Modern(n.d.),” there is a similar statement: “Architecture as we know it came out of Egypt.” (p. 6).

²¹³“The Theory of Greek Architecture...” (1908), *op.cit.*, p. 218.

²¹⁴*Architecture, Mysticism and Myth* (1891), as per 1975 repr., *op.cit.*, p. 2.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 6.

²¹⁶*Scips and Scraps*, *op.cit.*, 1956, p. 26. Lethaby suggested that India’s problems in his time were similarly caused by “the divorce of higher thought and the common working life.”

²¹⁷TS “Origins” (n.d.), Barnstaple, p. 6.

latter, Lethaby wrote in 1908, one should try to appreciate it for what it was and try to understand its character. Also, he thought, one should realize that the ancient Greek architect aimed toward the perfection of an ideal type—an approach Lethaby thought was no longer appropriate. Universality of principle in ancient times was further commented upon in the same article. He said that “proportion” to the ancient Greek “meant the discovery of a law of typical perfection like the laws of geometry, number, and music, to apply it to building was the way to attain to an Absolute Architecture.”²¹⁸ The virtues of ancient Greek art, he said, lay with its intensity, not its variation or originality.²¹⁹ Lethaby quoted Samuel Butcher (1850-1910) on Greek literature and drama to show the commonality of this aspect of ancient thinking: “...[a] particular type was created...no blurred image, no confusion of kinds, was permissible [once a particular branch of literature was created]...any deviation...fell within well-defined limits.”²²⁰ Further assistance in service to this point was obtained through quoting the recently deceased Adolf Furtwangler (1853-1907), presumably in reference to ancient Greek sculpture: “The ancient artist clung to established types.”²²¹

One should not follow the forms of the ancient Greek today, Lethaby believed, for they comprised a type which responded only to the needs of their day. Rather, Lethaby said: “The lesson and substance of Greek architecture for us, if we could get at it, is in the principle.”²²² What this principle was is not clearly explained, although Lethaby may have had in mind that one should strive after an ideal appropriate to one’s own time and place. This is expressed a few years later, in 1911, in Architecture when Lethaby wrote that the principal gifts of the ancient Greek builders are those of the ideal and of the spirit.²²³ The Greeks’ other contributions, also mentioned in Architecture, included rescuing the “spirit of beauty from

²¹⁸“The Theory of Greek Architecture...” (1908), op.cit., p. 215.

²¹⁹Ibid.

²²⁰Ibid., p. 216.

²²¹Ibid., p. 217. Lethaby, in the same article reiterated, in regard to the Greek architectural orders, that “change, design, originality were all excluded.” (Ibid.)

²²²Ibid., p. 214.

²²³Architecture (1911), as per 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 78.

the hieratic” and aiming at “what was gracious and lovely.”²²⁴ Architecture was thus purged of the “terror” that Lethaby claimed was intentionally incorporated in the earliest architectural works.

Possibly in an attempt to urge modern architects to justify what they did, Lethaby pointed out in 1908 that ancient Greek architects were expected to “hold and announce” their theories.²²⁵ Many Greeks, he said, published critical analyses of buildings they erected. He relied on Vitruvius in observing that this had been the case with Chersiphron, Metagenes, Ictinos, Carpion, Satyrus, and Pythias.²²⁶ Other ancient architects, it was known, again courtesy of Vitruvius, produced treatises on the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders.²²⁷

Other aspects of ancient Greece were also praised. The Parthenon, even to such a champion of the medieval as Lethaby, was wonderful. The great work was dedicated, Lethaby pointed out in 1917, to Athena, whom he noted was (among other things) the Goddess of Crafts.²²⁸ Lethaby also stressed the salubrious results of artistic rivalries between Hellenistic cities and called the Greek city, in general, the “supreme manifestation of Hellenic genius.”²²⁹

²²⁴Ibid., p. 79.

²²⁵“The Theory of Greek...” (1908), *op.cit.*, p. 213. This was one of the infrequent instances where “theory” was presented positively in the context of Lethaby’s remarks about architecture.

²²⁶Ibid., p. 213.

²²⁷Ibid.

²²⁸“The Centre of Gravity” (1920), as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 231.

²²⁹First clause from a newspaper review (“Patriotism and Art Production—The Value of City Rivalries”) of a talk Lethaby gave in Birmingham entitled “Local Patriotism and Art Production.” (date and name of paper not avail.) Second clause from TS “Ancient City Worship and Architecture,” p. 21 (n.d., possibly notes for a lecture). The value of artistic rivalry was also highlighted in comments about medieval times. In France of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, cities were engaged, he said, in beneficial artistic competitions (presumably in the construction of ecclesiastical monuments) and this situation had occurred in England also, in such places as Canterbury, London, York, Durham, Lincoln, and Salisbury. (Barnstaple, newspaper review of talk “Local Patriotism and Art...,” *op.cit.*) Lethaby, interested in the circumstances of the worker both from the standpoint of better art production and the larger perspective of his concern for society-at-large, also portrayed ancient Greece in a definitely *unfavorable* light sometimes – emphasizing that it was “a slave state.” (“The Foundation in Labor,” as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), pp. 218-219; orig. publ. in the *Highway*, March, 1917.)

The decline of Greece was attributed by Lethaby, as in the case of the Egyptians, to a situation where “a class of ‘thinkers’ separated themselves from the workers.”²³⁰ He said there was in ancient Greece a “destruction of the craftsman class by ‘words.’”²³¹ In the Hellenistic stage of ancient Greek development (paradoxically, considering what he had said about the cities then) Lethaby said he found one of the lower amplitudes in the historical cycle; for him, this was a time of decadence and he linked this to that culture aiming toward “free delight.”²³²

Pre-Medieval Time—Etruscans and Romans

In 1917 Lethaby took exception to allowing too much credit for the Etruscans in the development of the Roman civilization to follow, preferring to emphasize an “underlying, long-present Greek tradition in Italy.” He also suggested that in considering the development of Roman art, another factor be borne in mind—that between the “typical” architecture of Greece and Rome there came: “a great ‘transitional style’ worked out in the eastern part of the empire...[in Alexandria, Ephesus, other cities of Asia Minor, and in Pompeii].”²³³ In these places and this time in Hellenistic art “practically every detail which we are apt to consider ‘Roman’ was produced and then perfected to a point never accomplished in Rome itself.”²³⁴ Despite what Lethaby thought was the derivative character of Roman art, one could learn lessons from the Romans as well as from the Greeks. For one thing, as Lethaby pointed out in 1911, familiarity with Roman culture could aid in learning to “re-identify the architect and the engineer.”²³⁵ Lethaby relied on Vitruvius to back up his belief in the close relationship of engineering and architecture.

²³⁰Scripts and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 26.

²³¹Ibid.

²³²“What Shall We Call Beautiful,” as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 153. Orig. publ. in the Hibbert Journal, April, 1918.

²³³“The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., p. 1.

²³⁴Ibid., p. 1.

²³⁵Architecture (1911), as per 1955 ed., p. 99.

Engineering, he maintained, had been the basis for, if not the essence of, architecture since Roman times.²³⁶

Also from the Romans, Lethaby stressed in 1911, one could learn from methods of construction and particularly about the use of concrete.²³⁷ Roman skills in arch construction were commended in 1917.²³⁸ Roman buildings formed “splendid organic groups and, through the “largeness and clearness” of their architectural planning and soundness of construction, Roman architecture, Lethaby said, had much in common with all fine schools of building art.²³⁹ Lethaby added that a “frankness of expression was often attained, which only the greatest schools share with it.”²⁴⁰

On the negative side, Lethaby labeled Roman art as “the great Philistine style,” which he said mirrored, as always, the soul of the nation.²⁴¹ Morally, Lethaby found Roman art wanting; “it had force and splendor,” yet was also oppressive and “self-satisfied.”²⁴² Roman architectural theory was susceptible to criticism also. But he seemed content to rely on Vitruvius’ writing about the Greeks and generally treats this Roman author favorably except in regard to Vitruvius’ proportional system.²⁴³ On this Lethaby had commented in 1908: “The method of ratio measurement as used by Vitruvius is merely absurd.”²⁴⁴ Lethaby continued, in reference to the proportional system Vitruvius devised, based on the human body:

²³⁶“Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

²³⁷ Architecture (1911), as per 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 98. Again in 1929 (“Architecture as Engineering,” op.cit.), Lethaby presented the chief Roman architectural virtue as that of construction (1 Feb., p. 252). This seems to be in keeping with the tack taken by most recent historians as well.

²³⁸“The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., p. 1. Lethaby cited specifically the Baths of Caracalla, mainly the groin vaults.

²³⁹Ibid., pp 1 and 2.

²⁴⁰Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴¹ Architecture (1911), as per 1955 ed., p. 99.

²⁴²Ibid.

²⁴³“The Theory of Greek Architecture” (1908), op.cit., p. 216. Lethaby did rely on Vitruvius’ comments on the Greeks, however, as suggested earlier.

²⁴⁴Ibid.

If Nature, says he [Vitruvius], has made the body so that the members are measures of the whole...so the ancients have determined that in their works each portion should be an aliquot part of the whole. This seems quite simple as to how many parts of the lesser should go into the greater. How, for instance are we to know if a column should be eight, nine or ten times its diameter in height, and if either...its diameter in height, and if either eight or nine why not anything between; indeed Vitruvius himself preferred eight and a half. It reminds one of the system of the London contractor who framed his estimates by multiplying a quarter by four—the quarter he guessed. Again, Vitruvius gives it as a great fact of natural proportion that if a man lies down with his arms fully extended he may be included in a square or a circle. He doesn't mention that, as the arms do not radiate from the middle of the body but from near the head, if all can be included in a circle the square which is also to enclose him will be very oblong. He is assured that 'beauty is produced by the dimension of all the parts being duly proportioned to one another.' So are we, but the questions remain, which, and how, and where?²⁴⁵

Miscellaneous Thoughts on Byzantine, Early Christian, Far Eastern and Pre-Columbian Work

Regarding Byzantine architecture, Lethaby wrote in 1907 that the Roman structural art "...free and frank, passed imperceptibly into Byzantine building." The old pillar and beam architecture, Lethaby said, was entirely merged into the architecture of domical roofs sustained by wall masses."²⁴⁶ A few years later he assessed Byzantine (and also Early Christian architecture) as being valuable for contributions in the field of construction and for providing (although he did not explain how this was accomplished) an art made free of formulas.²⁴⁷

Occasionally, Lethaby would offer a thought about early art development in the Western Hemisphere. One of the more interesting was his comment in 1924 (offered unfortunately without elaboration), was that Ancient American art was an offshoot of Asiatic Art.²⁴⁸ It appears that Lethaby had in mind some more direct connection than the evolutionary kind which would have accompanied the slow migration of Asiatic peoples across the Siberian Strait, and down through North and South America. Further, he linked the art of ancient America with Hellenistic art, the influence of which he saw extending

²⁴⁵Ibid., p. 216.

²⁴⁶"The Spirit of Rome..." (1917), op.cit., p. 2. One of Lethaby's first books was his study, with Harold Swainson, of the Hagia Sophia (publ. in 1894).

²⁴⁷Architecture (1911), p. 118. Lethaby's most complimentary remark about Venice is based on the Byzantine influences he had noticed there. (Ibid.)

²⁴⁸"Hellenistic Art in Ancient America," 1 Feb., 1924, The Builder, pp. 184-185. This was a book review by Lethaby of Donald MacKenzie's Myths of Pre-Colombian America, (1924).

to India and China.²⁴⁹ Lethaby believed there had been a significant penetration of Hellenistic influence into Eastern Asia, also mentioning Western influence on the Orient during Early Christian times.²⁵⁰

The Medieval Period

As with his principal mentors and a number of earlier figures (like Pugin) important in English architectural development in the nineteenth century, the medieval period was Lethaby's favorite. Medieval times, he thought, offered more to learn from and be inspired by than any other. He believed the period provided a still valid model for contemporary architectural activity.

Lethaby made important contributions to the understanding of medieval architecture. As the historian Talbot Rice pointed out in 1957, Lethaby was among the first to see that early medieval art was not, essentially, the vestiges of a past civilization but rather the birth of a new outlook. He noted that Lethaby's view was similar to that of the prominent Austrian historian Strzygowski on this point but Rice also suggested that one of Lethaby's principal contributions to the study of medieval art was his recognition of the primary, formative role played by regions of the east Mediterranean and Byzantium—that is, medieval art seen as the final expression of developments begun in the near East in Early Christian times.²⁵¹

Most of Lethaby's comments about medieval architecture are about Gothic work. Lethaby stressed that, like other periods, Gothic was affected by earlier work (Roman and Romanesque) as well as by religion, economics and the influence of place, time, and available materials.²⁵² The feudal system and

²⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 184-185. For evidence of continued popularity of the first premise, see Paul Shao's book, Asiatic Influences in Pre-Columbian American Art (1976) and The Origin of Ancient American Cultures (1983), both by Iowa State University Press.

²⁵⁰Ibid. Especially this would include Alexander the Great's penetration deep into India. The architectural influence of the West on India at least, is unquestioned today.

²⁵¹Part IV: "Scholarship and Writings," part of "William Richard Lethaby, 1857-1831/A Symposium in Honour of his Centenary," R.I.B.A.J., Third series, Vol. 54, No. 6; April, 1957, p. 223.

²⁵²TS "Middle Ages," n.d., Barnstaple, p. 3. In a more opaque remark in reference to Gothic's genealogy, he described it as "the fourth phase of Greek" (1921), "Modernism and Design," Part VIII: "The Mystery of Mouldings," 5 Aug., The Builder, p. 165).

contacts with the East also played a role, he said. But the most important words Lethaby used to describe Gothic art were those characterizing it as a product of the “Folk mind”; he said these works reflected the “Spirit of the Age.”²⁵³ This interest in “Zeitgeist,” less universally subscribed to today, was popular in the first decades of the twentieth century. The interest in this concept was shared by Lethaby with German art historians like Wilhem Worringer. Related phrases by Lethaby about this quality take on the ambiance of, perhaps, gnomes in the Schwarzwald – or architecture as an outcome of the “forest heart.”²⁵⁴ Other key words Lethaby used to describe Gothic work were “wonder,” “energy,” “mysticism,” “organic” and “geometry.”²⁵⁵ A full understanding of Gothic is impossible, Lethaby thought; we ought, instead of criticizing and judging it, to “examine and wonder.”²⁵⁶ Lethaby admiringly described Gothic in 1911 as “the most original of all theories of building.” But “originality” was not even an applicable concept in one sense, for the Gothic cathedrals, Lethaby said, were “discovered” or “revealed,” not “designed.” Taking aim at a contemporary issue he asserted that these work of old certainly were not designed for “taste.”²⁵⁷

In 1893 (Leadwork), Lethaby described medieval architecture as “natural” and “spontaneous.”²⁵⁸ Medieval art expressed the artist, even his mood and this was a quality Lethaby thought should be regained.²⁵⁹ Lethaby noted in 1911 that earlier writers had thought that the stone forms of large Gothic

²⁵³See TS “Middle Ages,” p. 5, Barnstaple, for Lethaby’s comments about the Gothic “folk mind” and Architecture (1911), as in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 154 for a comment about Gothic embodying the “spirit of the age.” Lethaby had likened Gothic architecture to the “forest romances” in literature in that they were similar products of the “folk mind.” (TS “Middle Ages,” p. 5). Here he also commented that one of the most important factors enabling the appearance of Gothic was the “folk psychology of the time.” (Ibid.)

²⁵⁴“Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder, 11 Jan., 1929, p. 53.

²⁵⁵From the following sources in Lethaby’s writing: Architecture (1911), as found in the 1955 ed., op.cit., pp. 154 and 156-157; Lethaby to Webb correspondence from 1904; TS “Medieval Architecture” (with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple, n.d., p. 3) and “The Wit and Wisdom of ...” (1932), The Builder, and “Architecture as Structural Geometry” (1929), p. 53.

²⁵⁶TS “Medieval Architecture” (Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple, n.d.), p. 3. There is a strong similarity to Webb’s point of view in all this. In a letter to Lethaby in 1903 (17 Sept.), Webb stressed the quality of “wonder” in Gothic cathedrals, calling this an “essential” of Gothic. (Letter in possession of John Brandon-Jones.)

²⁵⁷Architecture (1911), as in 1955 ed., op.cit., pp. 158-159 and p. 156.

²⁵⁸Leadwork (1893), pp. 3.

²⁵⁹Ibid. pp. 3-4.

structures were suggested by “avenues in a wood.”²⁶⁰ But Gothic architecture was not a simulation of trees (that is, not a direct metaphor for the forest) as previously thought, said Lethaby, “but unconsciously, the forest mind was there.”²⁶¹ Gothic architecture, he wrote, was (variously) “clear,” “gay,” “passionate,” “tender,” “economical,” “reasonable,” “daring,” “sharp,” “strong,” and “healthy,” but he also maintained that it could not be explained completely in words.²⁶² An extension of Lethaby’s insistence on the particularity of architecture in time and space was his belief that the buildings produced in each century would reflect a strong national “essence.” Gothic, the International Phase notwithstanding, provided evidence of this for Lethaby; for him, Gothic was the great ‘National’ art.²⁶³ For Lethaby, contradictory descriptions were no problem, even in the same passage. In a passage in Architecture (1911), for example, he described Gothic architecture as both “clear” and “mystical.”²⁶⁴

Lethaby was interested in architects staying in touch with scientific principles and he saw in the Gothic “a great scientific movement, an exploration and expansion of principles and powers.”²⁶⁵ Medieval builders, Lethaby said in 1929, never talked “of aesthetic architecture, but much of craft, science, and what they called geometry.”²⁶⁶ For medieval masons, he said, geometry was “an idea, a principle, an enthusiasm.”²⁶⁷ Aesthetic theory, Lethaby maintained (ever campaigning to diminish such pre-

²⁶⁰ Architecture (1911), as in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 157. Possibly a reference to Laugier.

²⁶¹ TS “Middle Ages,” Barnstaple (n.d.), p. 6.

²⁶² “The Wit and Wisdom...,” The Builder, 8 Jan., 1932, op.cit., pp. 52 and 53, (No orig. date of the saying given); the notion that Gothic was “economical” is from Architecture, 1911, 1955 ed., p. 158.)

²⁶³ Series on Webb in The Builder (1925), as found in the book version Philip Webb (1935), p. 65.

²⁶⁴ Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 154.

²⁶⁵ “Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder, 11 Jan., 1929, p. 53. This stress on Gothic as developed by “free and energetic” experiment was also expressed in some excerpts in “Wit and Wisdom...” (1932), The Builder, 8 Jan., 1932, op.cit., p.53.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

²⁶⁷ Ibid. Lethaby may have had in mind here the intricate configurations of groin vaulting and buttressing systems.

occupations in his own time) was not responsible for the greatness of medieval work. Rather this was due to down-to-earth things like, for example, the exploration of the structural possibilities of stonework.²⁶⁸

One can notice Lethaby using another descriptive term, “organic,” as early as 1908. There he did not seem to be applying the term to ancient work but did so in 1917 in describing a cluster of Roman buildings.²⁶⁹ But medieval churches too, were examples of “organic design.”²⁷⁰ In another source Lethaby linked the idea of organic and Gothic in a strong way in saying that “organic Gothic must last forever as a theory of building.”²⁷¹

Lethaby’s unfavorable disposition towards “theory” and “aesthetics” in discussing architecture is also shown in his references in 1929 to the medieval architect Villard de Honnecourt: “No affectation of mystery, no riding the high-art horse; it is the practical talk of a mighty workman.”²⁷²

In Lethaby’s work his enthusiasm for the medieval is often manifest. Except for early designs which tend to draw inspiration from other periods, like the “Lodge and Covered Entrance” submitted for the Designing Club competition in the Building News in 1877, the inspiration is medieval.²⁷³ The close ties of all Arts and Crafts architecture with the earlier Gothic Revival are easy to observe. Lethaby’s mentors, Ruskin, Morris and Webb doubtless transferred these enthusiasms for the medieval personally to

²⁶⁸TS “Middle Ages” (n.d.) Barnstaple, p. 5. Aesthetics are referred to here as “occult,” another play on utilizing the appellations of un-understood qualities of elusive definition in either a negative or positive light (another example being “wonder” in medieval architecture). Villard de Honnecourt was favorably assessed by Lethaby and he said of Villard’s writing: “No affection of mystery [note again the ambivalent usage of “mystery”] etc., no riding the high-art horse. It is the practical talk of a mighty workman.” (1929, “Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder, 11 Jan., 1929, p. 52. Villard is quoted and referred to as early as 1886. See, for example, an entry in Lethaby’s sketch book of that year.

²⁶⁹“The Spirit of Rome...,” The Builder, Jan., 1917, pp. 1-2.

²⁷⁰Architecture, (1911), as in 1955 ed., op.cit., pp. 156-157.

²⁷¹“The Wit and Wisdom...,” The Builder, 8 Jan., 1932, op.cit., p. 53, n.d. given for the original quote. He cautioned though, as he continued, that “phenomenal Gothic, as it existed in fact” was possible only at the time it was produced. This was another argument against the tenets of the Gothic Revival. “Organic” was a popular term on both sides of the Atlantic in Lethaby’s time. Arts and Crafts architecture emanating from England was consciously “organic” in efforts to simulate the forms of England’s vernacular work. Arts and Crafts ornamental patterns utilized “organic” themes as well. The foliated decorative pattern of the font Lethaby designed for his church at Brockhampton (1901) illustrates this.

²⁷²“Architecture as Structural Geometry” (1929), op.cit., p. 52.

²⁷³Even the design cited here is not completely divorced from the influence of medieval art.

Lethaby. Despite the advanced use of exposed concrete to form the nave roof of Lethaby's church at Brockhampton, the church, from all outward appearances, presents itself with the asymmetrical massing as might have been acquired through an accretive process common for a medieval parish house of worship—with historical forms, pointed window heads and thatch as the outer roofing material.²⁷⁴ The Middle Ages were for Lethaby, as he said in 1893, supreme. Later periods, he thought, were times of decadence.²⁷⁵ The next section will discuss this last notion in more detail.

The Renaissance and Beyond

In “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), Lethaby presented the Renaissance as a “strange development... [which] looked forward in most things but backwards in art.”²⁷⁶ The roots of the Renaissance, as Lethaby summarized it, were 1) a “re-stimulation of Italian nationalism,” 2) “a reaction against German [northern] domination,” and 3) “a casting back to the might of old Rome.”²⁷⁷ In a similar list of characteristics offered in 1925, the first point again appeared but the others were the suggestion that the Renaissance could be thought of as political “movement” and the idea of the Renaissance as a “revival.”²⁷⁸ The Renaissance was, according to Lethaby, a negative development insofar as art and architecture were concerned. When he commented on some aspect of the art of the period, the treatment was usually less charitable than his comments on Gothic.

In the Renaissance, Lethaby observed, there was a change in attitude towards classical culture and, for architecture, a consciousness of the ancient monuments of Rome had again appeared. Lethaby

²⁷⁴See also, for example, Lethaby's fireplace design using a Tudor Gothic arch (R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, London), n.d. A Tudor-arch fireplace design by Lethaby (under his competition pen name “Debut” was publ. in the Building News, 23 Feb., 1877, in one of the rounds of the periodical's “Designing Club” competitions.

²⁷⁵Leadwork (1893), p. 1.

²⁷⁶“The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), orig. an April 18 address to the R.I.B.A., as repr. In Form in ... (1922), p. 74.

²⁷⁷TS “Renaissance and Modern,” op.cit., p. 1. The first point, on Italian nationalism, was brought up also in his 1911 book, Architecture, as found in the 1955 ed., p. 178.

²⁷⁸Series on Webb in The Builder (1925), as found in the book version Philip Webb (1935), p. 64. This last could equate to the third characteristic in the earlier list.

emphasized in his writings on Renaissance architecture the re-discovery of Vitruvius' treatise. It was, he said, "greatly adopted as a guide" and became a sort of "Bible of Architecture." To show his disapproval of an architecture based on ancient recipes, Lethaby referred sarcastically to the treatise as "an inspired work which dictated an absolute revealed art." A new awareness of the individual apart from a role as part of a larger unit of society emerged in the Renaissance. Lethaby saw this as an unfavorable development, possibly connecting this with what he saw as an over-emphasis on individualism (and on "talent," "genius" and "originality") in the arts in his day. In both olden times and in the present Lethaby saw this as producing a "self-conscious" architecture based on precedents, accomplished by artists overly aware of themselves. Also in the Renaissance, Lethaby noted, accompanying an interest in past art, was a revision in attitude about "Northern" art. This led, Lethaby pointed out, to the latter being designated "Gothic" or "barbaric" by Raphael and others of the Italian Renaissance.²⁷⁹

The definition of architecture also underwent an important change, in the Renaissance, Lethaby thought. A differentiation was made between "Architecture" (Lethaby's use of quotes) and traditional building. Lethaby noted that "Men of taste who travelled, sketched, lived in offices and called themselves Architects" became separated from actual "doers." Also, Lethaby observed, patronage changed in the Renaissance; as the aristocracy grew there was a demand for palaces.²⁸⁰ Art had become divorced from common life, he thought; it had become divorced from "the people."²⁸¹ As a consequence of its remoteness from the people, Renaissance art became a matter of "pride," "pretty shapes," "taste" and "appearance." An emphasis on building which Lethaby believed to be the "essential centre" of

²⁷⁹ All of the excerpts in this paragraph taken from TS "Renaissance and Modern," (n.d.), Barnstaple, pp. 1 and 2. This TS, like several others at Barnstaple, appears to have been done as part of a set or series, but it has not been possible to associate them with any publ. work of known date or to otherwise date them.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

²⁸¹ Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 178.

architecture, gave way, he said “to scholarship and taste; knowledge of precedents took the place of adventure.”²⁸²

Lethaby pointed out in 1911 that the Roman Revival (as Lethaby called the Renaissance and later developments now known as Baroque, Neo-classicism, etc.) as a whole was “arid and sterile”; nothing grew from it.²⁸³ He thought that what he saw as the sterility of the Renaissance may have come about partly from a lack of interchange with eastern ideas, a view that fits with Lethaby’s tendency to ascribe more significance to Eastern influence on the development of art in the West than his contemporaries. However, the important East-West connection via Venice, for example, was apparently not considered.²⁸⁴ With all its concern with dead forms and ideas, it “lacked the spirit of life.”²⁸⁵ Lethaby had claimed that the downfall of the crafts was brought on by the Renaissance, contrary to more recent assessments suggesting that craftsmanship attained new heights then.²⁸⁶ And, according to Lethaby: “Someone who has even partly understood the great primary styles – Greek and Gothic–must admit that the Renaissance is a style of boredom.”²⁸⁷ In 1911, Lethaby said that the Renaissance, besides being lifeless, was “blind, puffy and big-wiggy.”²⁸⁸ Renaissance architecture, Lethaby thought, “became an art of pretence rather than an art of practice, an art of ostentation and arrogance rather than of service and friendliness.”²⁸⁹

²⁸²Ibid., pp. 179 and 191.

²⁸³Ibid., p. 179.

²⁸⁴Ibid.

²⁸⁵“The Wit and Wisdom...,” The Builder, 8 Jan., 1932, op.cit., p. 53. Orig. date of the quote not given.

²⁸⁶“Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades,” Journal of the Royal Society, (1897), XIV p. 855.

²⁸⁷“The Wit and Wisdom...,” The Builder, 8 Jan., 1932, op.cit., p. 53. Orig. date of the quote not given.

²⁸⁸Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 180.

²⁸⁹TS “Renaissance and Modern,” n.d., p. 3 (Barnstaple).

Lethaby described Renaissance art in 1911 as the “art of scholars, courtiers, connoisseurs, and middlemen.”²⁹⁰ It appears he may have been allowing his dissatisfaction with aspects of contemporary society to affect his view of the past.²⁹¹

Lethaby could bring himself to see some positive aspects of the Renaissance. Man had awakened then, he said in 1911, to being aware of the environment; there was a scientific spirit and there were improved ideas of civic order and hygiene, and there arrived in the Renaissance, “modern engineering.”²⁹² Architecturally, Lethaby said in 1925, the best results of the Renaissance were those connected with engineering.²⁹³ Near the end of his life, Lethaby still wrote favorably of the close relationship of architecture and engineering in the Renaissance.²⁹⁴

In 1911 Lethaby allowed that Renaissance art did sometimes lead to noble expression if there was a second inspiration besides Antiquity.²⁹⁵ The “second inspiration” might be a “reference to nature” (perhaps Leonardo’s and Dürer’s studies of nature could be examples). Michelangelo’s sculpture,

²⁹⁰ Architecture (1911), as per 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 180.

²⁹¹ Basil Ward (in his Preface to the repr. of Lethaby’s Architecture in 1955, op.cit., p. xviii) called Lethaby’s reservations about scholars and also his view that the Renaissance art was boring, “Ruskinian.” Blomfield wrote that Lethaby hated Renaissance architecture, connecting this feeling with its association in Lethaby’s mind with the rich and powerful, Lethaby’s socialist views perhaps also augmenting these prejudices. (in “W.R. Lethaby, An Impression and a Tribute,” R.I.B.A.J., 139, no. 8, 1932, orig. in The Builder, from an extract kept at the British Museum Reading Room, London) Further, Blomfield noted in 1932 that Lethaby thought that the Renaissance was responsible for producing the kind of architecture that existed (unfortunately, in Lethaby’s view) in his own time and that it was, as Lethaby would say, “designer” architecture. (Ibid.)

²⁹² Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 181-182.

²⁹³ Orig. 1925. This from 1935 repr., Phillip Webb, pp. 176-177. Besides its fame as a work of engineering, Brunelleschi’s dome is certainly one of the more compelling pieces of evidence for the city rivalries for which medieval and Renaissance Italy is known. Lethaby had an interest in city rivalries and considered a number of them through the ages to be quite healthy—especially as they might be beneficial to the production of art. From the Renaissance he listed such rivalries (not necessarily one with the other) as Venice, Bologna and Verona. (From “Local Patriotism and Art Production,” subtitled “The Value of City Rivalries,” n.d., 1st col. of 2-column newspaper clipping; perhaps a newspaper summary of one of his talks; among Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.) Webb had mainly mentioned medieval works in Italy and Lethaby tended to do the same.

²⁹⁴ “Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

²⁹⁵ Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 repr., op.cit., p. 179.

Velasquez's portraits, and the landscapes of Claude and Turner were praised in this context.²⁹⁶ Probably as a criticism of later developments he added that this "reference" was missing in the "sanctioned" architecture of the "Grand Style."²⁹⁷ The best Renaissance personalities (Renaissance meant here in the widest chronological sense) had the kind of attitude which Lethaby found essential. Leonardo and Wren (to a lesser degree) he said, saw that "great art like great science is the discovery of necessity."²⁹⁸ Similarly, in another place, Lethaby stressed that these two men and possibly others saw that what was essential was experiment, not the imitation of antiquity and the interpretation of dogmatic writing about styles, orders, and proportions.²⁹⁹

Also, Renaissance people were, commendably, writers. In 1908 Lethaby mentioned a number of architects and artists from the Renaissance and later related periods who could be counted in this group. The following were noted: Giotto, Botticelli, Alberti, Leonardo, Dürer, Michelangelo, Reynolds, Blake, and Chambers.³⁰⁰

Of literature from the Renaissance, Lethaby seems to have been most interested in the writings of architect/artist Vasari and in the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili. Vasari is quoted as early as 1882 by Lethaby and referred to as late as 1929.³⁰¹ References were usually favorable. The Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, not a work about architecture, seems to have attracted Lethaby's attention mostly in the 1880s and 1890s, when he must have been thinking most intensively about the issues he was to address in his first book,

²⁹⁶Ibid.

²⁹⁷Ibid.

²⁹⁸Ibid.

²⁹⁹TS "Renaissance and Modern" (n.d.), p. 3, Barnstaple.

³⁰⁰"The Theory of Greek Architecture" (1908), op.cit., p. 214.

³⁰¹1882 sketchbook (at the R.I.B.A.) and in "Architecture as Structural Geometry" (1929), op.cit., p. 53.

Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891). Given the element of mystery in the Hypnerotomachia, this seems understandable.³⁰²

Among Renaissance and Baroque architects, Lethaby admired the engineering aspects of Leonardo's work and the "simplicity" of fellow "engineers" of the period, Sangallo in Italy and Wren in England.³⁰³ Leonardo was mentioned favorably in 1910 as one who was not interested in the past but in "phenomena and principles."³⁰⁴ Peruzzi was placed in a seldom seen grouping with Michelangelo and Wren as architects who had produced "splendid" architecture.³⁰⁵ Palladio underwent widely varying assessments by Lethaby, although there is not enough additional commentary to explain the variation. In 1920, his work is described as "a splendid achievement"; the next year Architecture contains an obliquely negative phrase.³⁰⁶ From at least the age of twenty-three Lethaby had some knowledge of other Renaissance and Baroque artists. A sketchbook from 1880 indicates this in regard to such Italian masters as Cosimo Tura, Pollaiuolo, Masaccio, Primaticcio, Coreggio, Fra Filippo Lippi, Melozzo da Forlì, and Carlo Crivelli. Also, Lethaby knew of such contemporary northern artists as Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach, Rogier Van der Weyden, Anthony Van Dyke, and Peter Paul Rubens.³⁰⁷ Benvenuto Cellini is mentioned in 1890 and Donatello and Andrea Orcagna are also referred to in places.³⁰⁸

³⁰²For example, Lethaby mentioned the Hypnerotomachia in an 1886 Sketchbook now kept with his papers in Barnstaple and in Leadwork (1293). See later passages in this chapter for more on Lethaby's interest in mysticism.

³⁰³These references by Lethaby include those in "Architecture as Engineering" (1929), The Builder, p. 252.

³⁰⁴"The Architecture of Adventure" (1910), as repr. in Form in..., (1922), p. 74.

³⁰⁵Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 180. Most architects studied today as major contributors to Italian Renaissance architecture and, for that matter, Renaissance architecture elsewhere (with the exception of England) seem never to be mentioned by Lethaby at all, in print.

³⁰⁶"The Architecture of Adventure" (1910) as repr. in Form in..., (1922), op.cit., p. 77 and Architecture (1911), as found in the 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 180.

³⁰⁷1880 sketchbook, Barnstaple. In 1925 in his series in The Builder on Webb, Lethaby passed along Webb's admiration (shared at least in some cases) for the northern European painters Jan Van Eyck, Dierk Boots, Hans Holbein and Rogier Van der Weyden. (pp. 161-162 as in the 1935 book version, Philip Webb, op.cit.)

³⁰⁸Re: Cellini, see "Cast Iron and Its Treatment for Artistic Purposes," Journal of the Society of Arts, xxxviii (1890), p. 274; re: Donatello, see Architecture (1911), as found in the 1955 repr., op.cit., p. 181; re: Orcagna, see Scripts and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 39.

Lethaby saw the Renaissance as primarily an Italian affair and in his view, Italy appeared to play a much different (and larger) role in the artistic development of northern European countries than is now thought. In Renaissance times, Lethaby observed in 1911, Italy was looked upon as the most advanced country. The Papal Court was there and this was regarded as the center of European culture. The other courts of Europe sought to emulate this, Lethaby concluded.³⁰⁹

Lethaby, while not really sympathetic with the classically-inspired resurgence even in Italy, found it less agreeable (and less understandable) elsewhere. In the South, at least, it was a “perfectly natural impulse.”³¹⁰ It could be understood, he noted elsewhere, in the South as an “Italian Revival”; there “even the humblest worker must have understood what was happening and entered more or less into the spirit of the thing.”³¹¹ For other countries, Lethaby presented the new taste as being forcibly visited upon artists by their superiors. Prelates and rulers of other countries, he said, saw “how imposing and proper to rulers [the Italian work was ...and]began to impose...[it] on working artists in northern lands.”³¹² But the transfer of southern architectural ideas and classical forms to northern cultures resulted in problems in Lethaby’s view. Traditional northern rooflines and chimneys, for example, were altered to accommodate imported (southern) architectural tastes.³¹³

In England, Lethaby said in 1925, Italian art became “a badge of superiority”—“an Architecture of the aristocracy.” He observed that a class of “middlemen of ‘taste’ ” arose to accommodate the demand for this architecture and workers were submerged, their position degraded. National (indigenous) arts

³⁰⁹Architecture (1911), as in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 178.

³¹⁰Ibid., p. 178.

³¹¹TS “Renaissance and Modern,” (n.d.), Barnstaple, p. 2.

³¹²Ibid., pp. 2 and 3.

³¹³Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., p. 181.

were squashed as workers became cowed in the knowledge that their “betters” knew the mysteries of the new taste. There grew up, Lethaby said “a myth that culture was foreign.”³¹⁴

Among northern European writers on the arts in this period, Christopher Wren was a favorite of Lethaby. In 1896 he had reserved for Wren, probably only commenting in the context of developments in the British Isles and with the usual caution he exercised when making evaluations about “eminent people,” the title of “the first and last ‘great’ architect.”³¹⁵ In 1910 Wren was given a more unabashedly flattering accolade. Wren, Lethaby said then, was “the one English architect whose formal thought matters.”³¹⁶ Two years earlier, citing *Parentalia* (1750) by Wren’s son and referring indirectly to a work by Wren, Lethaby lauded Wren’s perception that architecture was to be of public value and the recognition that architecture was to perform sound service.³¹⁷ Lethaby also commended Wren in 1910 for his recognition that the true grounds of architecture depend on structural law.³¹⁸

One should copy Wren’s thought, however, and not his forms, Lethaby noted in 1910, although he did think well of Wren’s classicizing magnum opus, St. Paul’s. The classical forms utilized by Wren were done under protest, Lethaby explained.³¹⁹

³¹⁴Orig. from the series on Webb in *The Builder* (1925), as publ. as a book in 1935), p. 64.

³¹⁵“Of Beautiful Cities...” (1896), as publ. in *Art in Life* (1897), *op.cit.*, p. 106.

³¹⁶“The Architecture of Adventure” (1910) as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), *op.cit.*, p. 77.

³¹⁷“The Theory of Greek... (1908), *op.cit.*, pp. 80-83. Lethaby’s admiration for Wren in the foregoing context is certainly understandable since a major contribution of Lethaby himself to architectural thought involves his insistence that one should view and evaluate architectural objects in terms of their larger societal context. (See Chapter XI on “Towns and the Environment” for an extended discussion of this.) One should also credit Wren, Lethaby observed in 1911, with realizing that architecture could be used politically as a unifier, although this point was not fully explained. (*Architecture* (1911), p. 190.

³¹⁸“The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), as repr. in *Form in....* (1922), p. 85.

³¹⁹“The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 85 and 87. The favorable reference to St. Paul comes in 1919 is from “Ruskin: Defeat and Victory” as found in *Form in...* (1922), *op.cit.*, p. 186 (orig. April, 1919). Lethaby’s views on the situation in London after the Great Fire expresses many of the objections and doubts he had about post-medieval art in general: “I cannot say, nor have I the will, to follow the history of London after the fire. As rebuilt by Wren, it was fine enough, but all romance had gone, scholarship had superseded living art. Instead of beauty that all understood and enjoyed, a pretentious and unrealisable grandeur was aimed at. The age of Dons had set in.” (“Of Beautiful Cities” (1896), as found in *Art in Life...*, 1897, *op.cit.*, p. 98).

As to more negatively perceived personalities of the times (in the North), Philibert de L'Orme was singled out as a major detriment to good architecture in the Renaissance and later times. Because of him, Lethaby wrote in 1897 (with no further elaboration), building from this time ceased to be experimental.³²⁰ This may be attributable, considering the acceptance of de L'Orme's views in important circles, to the adherence in the latter's theory to guidelines set down in the tracts of the Italian theorists from Alberti onward.

A few other architects and artists of the times are mentioned in Lethaby's writings. Among the English, Inigo Jones was to be remembered for his planning activities, especially the planning of two London squares, not for his importation of Italian forms.³²¹ To be remembered for their engineering activities in Britain were such men as Robert Hooke (1635-1703), a contemporary of Wren. Also acknowledged for their importance to English architecture were Nicholas Hawksmoor and Sir William Chambers.³²² The English architect Sir John Soane Lethaby described as "a modern thinker" and "a most able constructor."³²³ Among English artists William Hogarth (1697-1764) was favorably mentioned and William Blake (1757-1827), in particular, seems to have been well-regarded by Lethaby.³²⁴ The German painter Hans Holbein the Younger (c. 1497-1543), present at length at Court in England, was favorably appraised for his realistic portraits while the work of England's own Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)

³²⁰ "Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades," Journal of the Royal Society, XIV, 1897, p. 853. A more favorable reference to de L'Orme can be found in 1920 in "Architecture as Form in Civilization," as repr. in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 11. (Orig. publ. in the London Mercury.)

³²¹ Lethaby's sketchbook date 14 April, 1908, kept at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection.

³²² Comment on Hawksmoor from "Of Beautiful Cities" (1896), as printed in Art and Life... (1897), op.cit., p. 108; comment on Chambers from "The Architecture of Adventure" (1910) as repr. in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 78. (Orig. an address to the R.I.B.A., 18 April, 1910); comment on Hooke from "Architecture as Engineering," Part II, 8 Feb., 1929, The Builder, p. 301.

³²³ Series on Webb in The Builder (1925), as found in the book version Philip Webb (1935), p. 64.

³²⁴ Hogarth material from "Of Beautiful Cities" (1896) as found in Art and Life... (1897), op.cit., p. 98. Two Blake woodcuts are in Lethaby's sketchbook of 1885 kept at Barnstaple. Among other places, he is referred to in 1920 where Lethaby quoted him. ("Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy...", as repr. in Form in..., 1922, p. 182, orig. publ. in the Hibbert Journal, June, 1920.)

was not treated as kindly, described as a painter of “perukes.”³²⁵ Lethaby apparently did regard Reynolds as capable of some sound thinking about the arts. Earlier, in Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891), Lethaby quoted from Reynolds that “invention” was “little more than a new combination of those images that have previously been in the memory.”³²⁶ Perhaps the human memory was an allowable storage spot but copy books were not. Among England’s outstanding contributors to the applied arts, Thomas Sheraton (1751-1806) was singled out.³²⁷

Lethaby in 1911 acknowledged the emerging Neo-Classicism of the mid-eighteenth century as a new movement but wrote disparagingly of its main idea, which was, in his view, to try “to produce an architecture by copying old external forms.”³²⁸ He must have had in mind not the more interpretive classicizing of the Renaissance and the Baroque but the more archaeological copying spurred by Winckelmann and by Stuart and Revett.

Lethaby joined up historical linkages to his own time when he said, disapprovingly, that “men of taste” added the copying of Gothic to their pursuits as well as trying to copy Greek. He suggested that this copying was done by the “suppliers of whims” to avoid unemployment!³²⁹ Art after the medieval period, he said in 1893, was generally “pedantic and pompous”—not “natural and spontaneous”; the emphasis, he said, was then on expense and worse, an attempt to make things look expensive without being so.³³⁰ As for architects: “since the Renaissance [and presumably continuing into his own time, they]...have conformed to the type of the priest rather than to that of the worker – the experimenting artist – they have

³²⁵“Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy...” (1920), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 176.

³²⁶Op.cit., as in 1975 repr., p. 1. Reynolds, however, was not always treated positively by Lethaby.

³²⁷“Of Beautiful Cities,” (1896), as publ. in Art and Life... (1897), op.cit., p. 99.

³²⁸Architecture, (1911), as in 1955 ed., p. 183.

³²⁹1925 series in The Builder on Philip Webb, as publ. in book form (Philip Webb) in 1935, pp. 64 and 65.

³³⁰Leadwork (1893), op.cit., pp. 3-4.

too often interpreted their office to be that of supplying grandeur, sometimes poor little vulgar grimacing grandeur.”³³¹

Mysticism as it Concerns Lethaby's View of Architecture in the Past and in his Own Time

Many aspects of Lethaby's point of view so far discussed in this chapter were shared with one or another historian or critic among Lethaby's contemporaries. But among writers of the late nineteenth century, it is only Lethaby who should be credited for opening a line of inquiry about the “mysterious,” “mystical,” or “magical,” as these terms might apply to architecture. Without giving up the requirement that architecture have a rational basis, Lethaby identified the presence of and continued need for the inexplicable (or non-rational) element in architecture. Architecture, he said in 1911, had been “born of need” but “it soon showed some magic quality.” He wrote that, “all true building touches [will touch] depths of feeling and opens the gates of wonder.”³³² He seemed to argue for continuing to build in the “old way.” He stressed the need for “keeping close to nature” and “necessity.” If this was done, he said, “wonder” and “mystery” would continue in architecture.³³³ Lethaby had said in 1891 that architectural form was influenced not only by our body of factual knowledge about the world but also by conjecture (our “imagined facts”) about the as yet unknown and/or the unknowable.³³⁴

³³¹TS “Renaissance and Modern” (n.d.), Barnstaple, p. 3. Among Lethaby's own works, classicizing details are sometimes found. His two houses in the New Forest—the country house at Avon Tyrell (1891-1892) and “the Hurst,” High Coxlease (1900-1901) both have Serlian windows.

³³²Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 8.

³³³Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 9.

³³⁴Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, (1891), p. 3 (orig. ed.).

The best starting point for understanding Lethaby's thoughts on this can be found in his earliest book, Architecture, Mysticism and Myth of 1891.³³⁵ A glance at the chapter titles—for example: “The Jewel-Bearing Tree” (Chapter 5), “The Golden Gate of the Sun” (Chapter 8), “Pavements like the Sun” (Chapter 9), “Ceilings like the Sky” (Chapter 10), and “Symbol of Creation” (Chapter 12)—would alert the reader that this book was intended to transcend a down-to-earth utilitarian discussion of architecture.

In his later series of articles on a similar subject in 1928 in The Builder, “Architecture, Nature and Magic,” Lethaby explained that the main thesis of his 1891 book, that the development of “building practice” and “ideas of world structure...acted and reacted on one another” was still a sound one.³³⁶ People in early times, Lethaby had written in 1891, sometimes constructed buildings as models to represent their conception of the universe.

But a reverse procedure also existed, Lethaby said. People sometimes used architectural metaphors to describe the universe. Early people, he continued, described the heavens as closed over, like a great house (and with cellars below).³³⁷ This seems to have been linked in Lethaby's mind with what he perceived to be a human desire to know boundaries and to determine “centers”. Lethaby argued that “mystery” was intrinsic to this kind of conceptualization.³³⁸ Also, he wrote, the universe as perceived in

³³⁵ A rethinking of many of the same issues addressed in the 1891 publication was offered in a series of articles Lethaby published in The Builder in 1928, “Architecture, Nature and Magic” (published posthumously as a book in 1955. In the back of the 1975 reprint of Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, op.cit., Godfrey Rubens introduced a seven-page bibliography of works of widely disparate subject matter all of which predate Lethaby's 1891 book. It is not made clear that this is a bibliography associated with the production of the book itself. Because of its inclusion one might reasonably think that this was the case but the wording used to introduce it casts doubt: “This Bibliography is not intended to be exhaustive but to give some idea of Lethaby's wide and indiscriminate researches...” (1975 reprint, p. 274; books in French as well as English are noted.) Further reading must have preceded the 1928 effort (“Architecture Nature and Magic” in The Builder) and such materials are listed in the 1956 book version of this. Examples: Robert Eisler's Weltenmantel und Himmelzelt (1910) and Charles Singer's From Magic to Science (1928).

³³⁶ “Architecture, Nature and Magic” (1928), The Builder, as in the 1956 repr., pp 15-16. See also the publication of this idea in Scripts and Scraps (1956, op.cit.), A.H. Powell ed. The original source of these comments by Lethaby are not provided in Scripts and Scraps. A similar expression can also be found in the TS at Barnstaple, “Origins” (n.d.). p. 4: “sympathetic relations were set up between the building and the universe conceived as a larger structure.”

³³⁷ Architecture, Mysticism... (1891). As found in 1975 repr., op.cit., p. 12.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

primitive times “must have been thought of as a living creature, a tent, a building” and cited early references to special relationships which were thought to exist between building, religious buildings in particular, and the structure of the world.”³³⁹ He drew on a contemporary work by De la Saussaye (Manual of the Science of Religion, 1891) for additional corroboration of the theory that temples referred symbolically (sometimes) to the structure of the world.³⁴⁰ Lethaby reminded his readers of Job, connecting the idea of the world as a box and cited two authorities from about the time of Christ, Philo and Josephus, as both having stated that there was a relation between the design of a temple and the world structure.³⁴¹ The Ziggurat at Borsippa (New Babylon) restored by Nebuchadnezzar and another at Khorsabad near Sargon’s Palace were cited to illustrate the idea of architecture built as symbols of world structure. The Pantheon in Rome was also mentioned.³⁴²

Early buildings serving as world models, Lethaby wrote, were not so much “a plan of the world for science [to serve science] but as a religious mystery and symbol, as magic amulet, charm, fetish.”³⁴³ In another writing Lethaby argued that the process of building itself, with the many associated rituals, had magical implications in earlier times. Then, the stability of a structure was believed to be dependent on the observance of these rites.³⁴⁴ Ornament too had a magical function in earlier times; it protected from evil spirits.³⁴⁵ Decoration was “a sort of magical tabooing,” utilizing gorgons, sphinxes, and griffins, as well as the palm and the lotus – all as protective devices and emblems of good luck.³⁴⁶

³³⁹Ibid., pp. 5, 6, and 10.

³⁴⁰Ibid., p. 6.

³⁴¹Ibid., pp. 13 and 28. Philo Judaeus (30 B.C. – A.D. 45) was a Hellenistic Jewish Philosopher of Alexandria; Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37 – 100?) was a Jewish historian.

³⁴²Ibid., pp. 43, 129 and 131.

³⁴³Ibid., p. 33.

³⁴⁴TS “Origins” (n.d.), Barnstaple, p. 4.

³⁴⁵Ibid.

³⁴⁶Ibid.

In later writings by Lethaby, ideas about magic and mysticism and its relationship to architecture also surfaced. A comment about magic in early architecture made in 1930 shows the duration of his views: “What we call magic was the result of early ways of looking at the universe.”³⁴⁷ He made the point then that “it is evident that buildings [pre-historic ones] erected for magical purposes would themselves have been considered magical.” Lethaby emphasized the magical (and protective) capabilities early ornament was thought to possess: “Sphinxes and Lions at doorways actually watched.”³⁴⁸

Many of the observations Lethaby made about magic and mysticism pertaining to architecture in earliest times were seen to apply to later periods as well. In his article on ancient Greek architecture he wrote: “The well-proportioned temple... was superhuman, and held some magic of perfection.”³⁴⁹ These temples, he reminded again in 1917, were regarded with awe, as being sacred and perfect.³⁵⁰

Lethaby had brought up in 1891, regarding Christian churches, the idea of the nave and chancel as symbols of heaven and earth, and in Byzantine works (centralized plan), of the ceilings representing the whole schema of the universe, with Christ, the Pantocrator, uppermost and central.³⁵¹ Lethaby noted in 1911 that, among the other qualities of Gothic works, that they were “mystical.”³⁵² In Gothic cathedrals “the old builders worked wonder” in. They could effect “enchantment”; “magic” was there.³⁵³ The cloister at Salisbury Cathedral, for example, was described by Lethaby as “a place of magic peace.”³⁵⁴

³⁴⁷“The Spirit of Antiquity” (1930), op.cit., p. 4.

³⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 4-5.

³⁴⁹“The Theory of Greek...” (1908), op.cit., p. 215.

³⁵⁰“The Spirit of Rome...” (1917), op.cit., p. 2.

³⁵¹Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, (1891), as per 1975 repr., op.cit., p. 51.

³⁵²Architecture (1911), as found in the 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 154.

³⁵³Scraps and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 14. Orig. date of Lethaby’s words not given.

³⁵⁴“Modernism and Design,” Part VII: “The Uses of Antiquity,” The Builder, 1 July, 1921, p. 6. Webb’s opinions on these topics no doubt had had an influence on Lethaby. Webb wrote to Lethaby in 1903: “‘wonder’ is, I feel, an ‘essential’ of the Gothic and indeed, [it is the]...primary essential.” (Webb to Lethaby, 17 Sept., 1903, correspondence in possession of John Brandon-Jones.) Lethaby also passed this along to the public in his biog. series on Webb in The Builder in 1925. (See p. 131, 1935 book version, op.cit.)

In the Renaissance, Lethaby wrote in 1891, the tradition of associating building with schemes of world order continued.³⁵⁵ Lethaby was interested in this context in the description of the central temple described in the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (1499).³⁵⁶ Also from Renaissance times, Lethaby mentioned the town and temple in Tommaso Campanella's Civitas Solis (1602) with its "seven great rings named for the seven planets" and four main streets and gateways at the cardinal points.³⁵⁷ The Renaissance was in for some negative commentary as to works from that time having the quality of mystery. Lethaby wrote (in another place) that in the Renaissance the "natural sacredness and mystery of reality [had] passed away from building and a sham mysteriousness was introduced in its place."³⁵⁸

Returning to the subject of devices used to express ideas about the nature of the world, one should mention an item Lethaby singled out for special attention—the egg. In 1891 he observed that it had frequently been used in buildings as a symbol of creation of the world.³⁵⁹ He mentioned that several medieval writers had considered the world to be "oviform," for example, St. Bede and Edrisi. With reference to the story of Aladdin, Lethaby brought up the hanging of an egg in a building as a means of conferring on the building architectural perfection.³⁶⁰ Mantegna's use of an oviform shape in the Renaissance for the hanging lamp in one of his paintings was also cited.³⁶¹

³⁵⁵ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891), as found in 1975 repr., op.cit., p. 44.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 44 and 208. In Ruben's preface to the reprint he mentioned that Lethaby knew of this work by 1889. (1975 repr., p. xiv.)

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 44. A whole series of models of this type can be called to mind, drawing on other cultures, for example, the stupas at Sanchi in India, Borobodur in Indonesia and the Forbidden City in Peking.

³⁵⁸ TS "Renaissance and Modern" (n.d.), Barnstaple, p. 3.

³⁵⁹ Architecture, Mysticism... (1891), as found in 1975 repr., p. 269.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 265 and 269-271. St. Bede, the Venerable Bede, was an English scholar, historian and theologian (673-735); Edisi an Arab geographer..

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 260-261. The egg is shown in the central panel of Mantegna's polyptych St. Zeno altarpiece (1456-1460, Verona) above the Madonna and Child. In the Mantegna example, Lethaby noted that the egg signifies resurrection. On p. 261 (op.cit.), he reproduced a sketch of part of the Mantegna painting—the key panel (central, upper) of the altarpiece. Lethaby referred to the egg as being suspended "over our Lord" although it might be more accurately described as hanging over the Madonna holding the infant Jesus, enthroned.

Lethaby believed that artistic work of all ages possessed in common some supra-rational ingredient or at least the power to entice men to regard it so. He wrote in 1925: “All the greatest art preserves some strand of primitive frankness and an element of wonder.”³⁶² A few years earlier, in 1921, he had written of the incomprehensibility of past works, and of the mystery residing in the process by which old works were made—this was a kind of mystery had occurred because the reasons and goals of the past culture which had produced a work could no longer be fully understood.³⁶³

But he wrote in another place that the “architecture of magic”, with its “wonder” and “mystery” as it had been, was now gone.³⁶⁴ One could not in the present, as he said in 1891, use in architecture the messages of the past.³⁶⁵ These included connotations of “mystery” and, in the old days at least, “terror.”³⁶⁶ A number of years later (1928), again addressing the idea of cultural change with time and the effect on architecture, Lethaby wrote that there was “a great gulf” between “them” and “us.” But following Morris, he had advised in 1901 to give buildings, as there had been in days of old, a “certain mystery.”³⁶⁷ Wonder could be put back in building, he said in Architecture (1911), but it could only be achieved by being “intensely real.” The objects to emulate in this regard were “ships, bridges and machines” and the implication was that buildings should inspire “awe.”³⁶⁸ While confirming in the articles on Webb from 1925 that the magic identifiable in old buildings had no potency in the constructions of the modern world, Lethaby stressed that wonder could be supplied by a re-awakening of science.³⁶⁹ In his last years, one

³⁶²Series on Philip Webb, originally in The Builder (1925), as from the 1935 repr. as a book, p. 130.

³⁶³Part VII of “Modernism and Design”: The Uses of Antiquity,” 1 July, 1921, p. 6.

³⁶⁴TS “Renaissance and Modern” (n.d.), Barnstaple, p. 7. In his biography of Webb, Lethaby also stated that the former magic of ornament had (now) gone (orig. 1928, as in the 1956 book version, p. 144.)

³⁶⁵Architecture, Mysticism... (1891), as in the 1975 reprint, p. 7.

³⁶⁶Ibid.

³⁶⁷“Architecture Nature and Magic” (1928) in The Builder, as found in the 1956 repr. in book form, Architecture Nature and Magic, op.cit. and Morris as Workmaster (1902), op.cit., p. 16. (orig. 1901).

³⁶⁸Architecture (1911), as per 1955 ed., op.cit., p. 187.

³⁶⁹“Architecture Nature and Magic,” (1928), The Builder, as repr. in the book of the same name, 1956, op.cit., p. 26.

finds Lethaby linking mystery and science in a statement oriented toward the future: “There is a mystery of science as well as of magic, it is in front as well as behind.”³⁷⁰ But Lethaby suggested elsewhere that the “mystery” of science could not be made one with the irrational mystery of magic, at least as far as art and aesthetics were concerned. He said that he himself required a “mystical supplement” to any “strictly critical [rational?] view of beauty and art.” What was needed, he said, were several kinds of histories of building. Two of these were described as follows: One confined to structural problems, another to “attempt to reveal the minds of the builders and explain the deep religious magical and political element of ancient art.”³⁷¹

Lethaby’s 1891 book Architecture Mysticism and Myth was both a product of *fin de siècle* interest in mysticism, as Godfrey Rubens noted, and a catalyst to it.³⁷² One of the general, periodic developments in Western Art towards the “orientalizing” of forms accompanied this interest and the short-lived Byzantine Revival shows a particular strand of this. Lethaby implied in his 1891 book that the Byzantine style, especially the details of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (upon which subject he himself contributed seminal study a few years later) had been an influence on his contemporary, William Burges. In Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, Lethaby singled out Burges among contemporaries as someone who was able to impart to his work some of these unusual qualities about which Lethaby wrote. Lethaby referred particularly, in 1891, to the “mystery” of Burges’ own house—its “strong and barbarous splendor.”³⁷³ Rubens has pointed out plausibly enough (and the idea has been entertained by others also) that Lethaby’s 1891 book stimulated the Byzantine Revival in architecture in the late nineteenth century and thus influenced the design of such important works as J.F. Bentley’s Westminster Cathedral and the work of younger contemporaries such as Lethaby’s associate Sidney Barnsley. Barnsley used

³⁷⁰“The Spirit of Antiquity” (1930), op. cit., p. 5.

³⁷¹From MS “Notes on Aesthetics and Morals” (n.d.), p. 7, and TS “Origins” (n.e.d), p. 2, both at Barnstable.

³⁷²Godfrey Rubens commented on this in his Introduction to the 1975 repr. of Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, op.cit., p. x.

³⁷³Architecture, Mysticism... (1891), as found in the 1975 repr., op.cit., p. 254.

orientalizing forms in his Church of the Wisdom of God, Lower Kingswood (c. 1890).³⁷⁴ Affinitive interest among contemporaries in other disciplines is shown in the work of D.G. Rosetti who was in Morris' circle along with Lethaby. Rosetti's poem "Rosemary" includes an architectonic metaphor for the structure of the world similar to the ones that interested Lethaby:

The altar cell was a dome low-lit,
And a veil hung in the midst of it;
At the pole points of its circling girth
Four symbols stood of the world's first birth,
Air and water and fire and earth.³⁷⁵

The power of certain numbers thought to be important was also discussed. All sorts of architectural implications are mentioned, even the one in the book of one of Lethaby's most important mentors—the "seven" in Ruskin's Seven Lamps of Architecture.³⁷⁶

Lethaby's View of the Present and Past as Compared with That of Others

It only remains in this chapter to say something of how Lethaby's view of contemporary architecture and that of the past in the context of the larger body of thought on these subjects in his time. What will be noted is limited to the associations (concurring and non-concurring) Lethaby himself made, linking his ideas to those of others and to some exceptions taken to Lethaby's point of view. The relationship between Lethaby's thought and that of those from whom he seems to have drawn the larger part of his theory will begin this part of the discussion.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴Rubens' Introduction to the 1975 (and 1974) repr. of Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, *op.cit.*, p. xiii. See the corroborating illustration of this church in D. Martin's thesis on Lethaby (1957, *op.cit.*). A more direct influence on the cited church by Barnsley must have been his trip to Greece in 1899 to study Byzantine architecture, as noted by Peter Davey in The Architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1980, New York: Rizzoli, p. 159.

³⁷⁵"Rosemary" is quoted on p. 32 of Lethaby's Architecture, Mysticism and Myth. (1975 reprint).

³⁷⁶Architecture, Mysticism... (1891), as in 1975 repr. See chapter VI in general; re: Ruskin see p. 123.

³⁷⁷More will be said about Lethaby's relationship to the ideas of others in the more specialized contexts of Chapters III through XV.

Ruskin, Morris, Webb and Carlyle

Lethaby cited or mentioned Ruskin in his writing at least since the early 1890s and, in the years following Ruskin's death, in Morris as Workmaster, Lethaby reminded readers that Ruskin had "enlightened the world of art-criticism – then [in the late nineteenth century] under a cloud."³⁷⁸ In 1901, Lethaby said that he agreed with what he presented to be the meaning of art according to Ruskin (and Morris). Art meant in this case: "good quality," "reasonable fitness" and "pleasantness in all work done by hand for necessary service."³⁷⁹

Ethical and moral considerations were never absent from Ruskin's art criticism, Lethaby observed, and these were, as well, always prominent in his own writings, as in his article "What Shall We Call Beautiful" (1918).³⁸⁰ There he defended Ruskin against A.J. Balfour's charge that Ruskin intertwined aesthetics with theology and morality by observing that Balfour did the same and that, more importantly, Ruskin was not wrong to do so.³⁸¹ This intertwinement, Lethaby said, was part of Ruskin's attempt at a holistic theory.³⁸² The next year Lethaby related wistfully that, though Ruskin himself was forgotten, his thought "saturates this generation through and through."³⁸³ In this short retrospective look at Ruskin's theory, Lethaby outlined the principal lessons one might take from Ruskin:

- 1) Art is a part of work and it is not a luxury.
- 2) Science should be defined as wisdom and service, not an "endless heaping up of 'facts.' "

³⁷⁸Morris as Workmaster (1902), op.cit., p. 3 (orig. 1901). Earlier references to Ruskin by Lethaby include those in Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891), op.cit., and in "Of Beautiful Cities" (1896), as in Art and Life... (1897), op.cit.)

³⁷⁹Ibid., p. 14.

³⁸⁰As repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 150 and 165.

³⁸¹Ibid., p. 150. Arthur James Balfour (1845-1930) was trained in philosophy but was also a prominent politician, serving as Prime Minister of Britain 1902-1905. Re: Balfour's inconsistency, see Lethaby's "Notes on Aesthetics and Morals," MS, n.d., Barnstaple.

³⁸²Ibid.

³⁸³"Ruskin, Defeat and Victory" (1919), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 184. (Orig. April, 1910; probably a lecture delivered to the "Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.")

- 3) Economists should be looked at in askance – they are remote from the actual problem and they neglect issues of “quality.”
- 4) Education should not be thought of as competitive skill-gathering.
- 5) Artists should teach and inspire, not show off.
- 6) One should regard the land as our “garden home” – not appraise its prospects for exploitation.
- 7) Property must observe propriety.
- 8) That “Quality of life is the ultimate goal.”³⁸⁴

As for method, and this may explain some of the less congruent facets of his own theory, Lethaby pointed out that Ruskin was not concerned about being contradictory.³⁸⁵ Later Lethaby described Ruskin, linking him with Pugin, as a “continuer” and “improver” of the latter’s doctrine. He added, though, that by then Ruskin, who had provided a general philosophy of art, had been rejected; people turned instead to the “styles.”³⁸⁶ For Lethaby himself, as John Brandon-Jones remarked, Ruskin remained a major influence throughout his life.³⁸⁷

Morris was similarly venerated by Lethaby. One can find him quoted in Lethaby’s sketchbooks as early as 1886. Lethaby’s affinity for him (and the pre-Raphaelite associates) is made clear in his 1901 article on Morris. Only a year or so into practicing architecture on his own, Lethaby wrote admiringly of Morris’ willingness to descend from the theoretical world to the practical; he was one of the first, Lethaby said, to put to the test the idea that “the art of doing things could only be displayed by doing them.”³⁸⁸ In his 1901 essay on Morris, Lethaby stressed the following advice drawn from Morris and rephrased here:

- 1) One should undergo total immersion in the learning of a craft.

³⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 185-186.

³⁸⁵Ibid., p. 185.

³⁸⁶Series on Webb in The Builder (1925), as found in the book version, Philip Webb (1935), op.cit., p. 66.

³⁸⁷Brandon-Jones, “The Architectural Work of W.R. Lethaby,” R.I.B.A.J., third series, 64, April, 1957, p. 219. (Part of a collection of articles appearing in this issue under the heading “William Richard Lethaby/1857-1931—A Symposium in Honour of his Centenary.”)

³⁸⁸“The Builders Art and the Craftsman” (1892), Architecture, a Profession..., op.cit., p. 167.

- 2) Design should not be imitative or historical, but reminiscent of nature. It must possess “beauty,” “imagination,” and “order.”
- 3) Construction and Drawing: construction (and drawing) that does not force the medium and method; do the obvious – do the simple.
- 4) Avoid “designing,” it is better to “make.”
- 5) Colors should be harmonious but not drab.³⁸⁹

Lethaby frequently drew on Morris in his later writings too. In his contributing to a book on Ernest Gimson in 1924, he mentioned concurrence with Morris that all forms of decorative art are part of architecture and only have meaning in relation to this “mistress” art.³⁹⁰

Philip Webb was another who thought along similar lines. He, like Morris, was a somewhat older personality from whom Lethaby derived inspiration. As Lethaby acknowledged in a conversation after Webb’s death, the latter was held in “extravagant admiration” by his disciple.³⁹¹ Lethaby had written in 1925: “Anything I know of architecture is due to Philip Webb.”³⁹² Here also, demonstrating the almost religious esteem in which he held Webb, Lethaby told how he used Webb’s life as a standard for judging his own.³⁹³ The SPAB, functioning in part as a extra-mural architectural school headed by Webb, was described by Lethaby (as one of the “pupils”) as a school of “practical building.”³⁹⁴ One should, Lethaby

³⁸⁹Morris as Workmaster, (1902), op.cit., p. 16. (orig. 1901).

³⁹⁰Ernest Gimson-His Life and Work (1924), co-authored with Alfred H. Powell and F.L. Griggs, p. 5. Other instances of Lethaby’s concurrence with Morris’ views include Lethaby’s view of art as “right labour” and his stress on the necessity of “pleasure in labour,” views which Lethaby said he derived from Morris, and ultimately, from Ruskin. (From the book Philip Webb, op.cit., 1935, derived from Lethaby’s 1925 article series on Webb), p. 19. A lecture Lethaby gave on Morris in 1926 indicates Lethaby’s sympathy with Morris’ dim view of “restoration” work and, of course, the common commitment both men made to the efforts of the SPAB further document this (see Lethaby’s lecture on Morris in MS form, p. 13, Barnstaple).

³⁹¹Obit. of Philip Webb by Lethaby in the R.I.B.A.J., 8 May, 1915, vol. 22, p. 340.

³⁹²Series on Webb in The Builder (1925), as found in the book version, Philip Web (1935), op.cit., p. 147.

³⁹³Ibid., p. 1.

³⁹⁴Ernest Gimson (1924), op.cit., p. 3-4.

said, passing on some advice attributed to Webb, “learn to build” but also learn mathematics, mechanics, plumbing, sanitation and planning.³⁹⁵

The final person to be mentioned in terms of affinity to Lethaby’s theory and also much admired by the latter was Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). Lethaby did not refer to him as often as he did to Ruskin, Morris, and Webb, but it is clear that he belongs with the rest in Lethaby’s category of high honor. Carlyle Lethaby wrote, “foresaw it all and lifted up his voice in prophecy.”³⁹⁶ Carlyle began, Lethaby said, a “reorientation towards labour” which Ruskin carried further and Morris further still (the latter by actually doing some labor, Lethaby noted).³⁹⁷

Other English Writers—Additional Positive Links

Other English writers who Lethaby admired (some of whom were architectural practitioners as well) included Robert Kerr (1823-1904, “a forgotten critic of ability”), John T. Emmett (1828-1898), and Lisle March Phillipps (1809-1878). In reference to the latter, Lethaby wrote in 1921: “Ruskin, Morris, and March Phillipps have told us...what is the matter with modern architecture.”³⁹⁸ With Emmett, the attraction for Lethaby came from his stances against architectural ornament in use in late nineteenth century England and against drawing competitions; Phillipps, Lethaby said, was against revivalism and “copyism.”³⁹⁹ In 1917 writers such as Archer, Wells, Clutton-Brock, Muirhead-Bone, and Pennell were commended for having rejected the “marvelous proportions and exquisite style of Oxford Street and the

³⁹⁵Philip Webb (1935), *op.cit.*, p. 125 (orig. 1925 in *The Builder*).

³⁹⁶*Scraps and Scraps* (1956), *op.cit.*, p. 23. (Orig. date of Lethaby’s words not given).

³⁹⁷Lecture notes (MS) for 1926 lecture on Morris, p. 13. (Lethaby file, North Devon Athenaeum, Barnstaple.) Other favorable references to Carlyle appear in Lethaby’s biographical account of Webb in 1925 in *The Builder* and in another series (1928) also in *The Builder*, “Architecture, Nature and Magic.”

³⁹⁸“Modernism and Design,” Part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” 2 Dec., 1921, p. 750. The reference to Kerr is from “Architecture and Modern Life” (1917), as repr. in *Form in Civilization* (1922), *op.cit.*, p. 115. (Orig. a lecture by Lethaby at an R.I.B.A. conference, 24 Jan., 1917.

³⁹⁹Re: Emmett, see Philip Webb (1935), *op.cit.*, p. 84 (orig. from 1925); re: Phillipps, see “Modernism and Design,” Part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” 2 Dec., 1921, p. 750.

Strand.”⁴⁰⁰ Lethaby’s teacher, colleague, and fellow architect Thomas Graham Jackson was also accorded favorable treatment. In 1925 he linked Jackson’s teaching to Ruskin and Emmett. Jackson, Lethaby also said, tried to get rid of the architecture/non-architecture distinction in building.⁴⁰¹

Negative Encounters and Points of Departure—English Connections

Lethaby, Basil Ward observed in his preface to the 1955 edition of Lethaby’s Architecture, was an interpreter of Morris and Ruskin.⁴⁰² In many instances Lethaby remained true to the precepts of these other thinkers throughout his career. In some instances, however, these positions must have had an inhibiting effect on artistic activities if applied in a time too far removed from the context in which they were originally formulated. This comment by John Brandon-Jones in 1970 about the attitude of Morris towards the machine applies, on the whole, to Lethaby as well:

Frequent tirades by Morris against the senseless use of machinery for the making of poor substitutes for craft work have led many of his followers to believe that there is something wicked in the use of any machine for any purpose, and that there is some special spiritual grace to be obtained by spending hours hacking away with a hand tool at a job that could be done in a tenth of the time by machinery.⁴⁰³

But Lethaby did depart from Morrisian orthodoxy in some important ways. On the issue of the machine, Brandon-Jones noted, Lethaby took a more qualified view of the sinister nature of the

⁴⁰⁰“Architecture and Modern Life” (1917), as repr. in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 115.

⁴⁰¹Series on Philip Webb in The Builder (1925) as found in the 1935 book version, Philip Webb, p. 81. Lethaby also mentioned Jackson’s 1892 article on education in Architecture, A Profession or an Art? in this context. Jackson’s 1906 work, Reason in Architecture contained ideas similar to Lethaby’s in being anti-Art Nouveau and against “imitation and show.” Jackson was also favorably presented in Lethaby’s 1917 article, “Education of the Architect,” in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 129.

⁴⁰²From 1955 edition, op.cit., p. xx. The earlier writer and art critic Walter Pater was apparently held in some regard by Lethaby who quoted him in his 1890 article (“Cast Iron and Its Treatment for Artistic Purposes”, Journal of the Society of Arts, p. 272) and Pater’s writings are also mentioned in Lethaby’s sketchbooks of the 1880s (1880/1884-85).

⁴⁰³“After William Morris” (1970), Artifex, Vol. 4, p. 55.

machine.⁴⁰⁴ In 1925, Lethaby by his inclusion of a passage by Webb appears to side with the latter in opposition to Ruskin (and Fergusson) on the question of whether a building could be architecture without the addition of painting and sculpture.⁴⁰⁵

Although a kind word was occasionally said about him, Lethaby more often took exception to Fergusson's approach to architecture and architectural history. In 1897 he registered his opposition to the latter's distinction between "building" and "architecture."⁴⁰⁶ In 1908 Lethaby set up Ruskin and Fergusson as opposites: "nothing—could ever bring Ruskin and Fergusson to agree, or even to understand one another."⁴⁰⁷ Lethaby left no doubt as to how he would deal with the incompatibility of these positions: "I got rid of this...contradiction by sweeping Fergusson—as a theorist, not as a painstaking collector of facts—out of my field of vision altogether."⁴⁰⁸ Another objection to Fergusson's approach to architecture can be noticed in a comment by Lethaby from 1921. Then Lethaby complained that all the styles had been labeled and had been judged by our current "taste" and continued: "Fergusson even explained how the different ones [the historical styles] could be improved!"⁴⁰⁹

Lethaby sometimes found himself in opposition to such contemporary English writers as Arthur Clutton-Brock. In 1918 Lethaby objected that it was wrong to separate aesthetic value from utility, for that "would be taken even to sanction Blastism." He said Clutton-Brock (and the Italian aesthetician

⁴⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 55-56. Brandon-Jones observed that Lethaby was not able to get his friend Gimson to support the Design and Industries Association that he helped found. The D.I.A. was an organization which would improve, it was hoped, the design quality in machine-dependent industries.

⁴⁰⁵Series on Webb in *The Builder* (1925), as found in book version, *Philip Webb* (1935), p. 132. Much could be pointed to in the expression of Lethaby's own theory to reinforce the argument that he would have agreed with Webb on this.

⁴⁰⁶"Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades," *Journal of the Royal Society*, 23 July, 1897, p. 851.

⁴⁰⁷"The Theory of Greek Architecture" (1908), *op.cit.*, p. 214.

⁴⁰⁸Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹"Modernism and Design" (1921), Part VII: "The Uses of Antiquity," 1 July, p. 7. The sort of thing Lethaby was objecting to in this instance was spelled out more specifically in another reference to Fergusson: "[He] said of the Pantheon that the portico does not 'harmonize' with the round structure and its pediment is perhaps too high [but] how he knew he does not tell. William Morris once said of such views 'You might as well criticize a geological period.' " ("Origins TS, p. 2, with Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple.)

Croce) were wrong on this issue, disregarding Ruskin, Tolstoi and earlier, Plato.⁴¹⁰ Clive Bell's ideas also were questioned, including a concept central to his criticism, his concept of "significant form."⁴¹¹ A broader objection was raised when Lethaby announced his disagreement with "modern writers" (probably Roger Fry as well as Bell) that art was to be considered "delight" before it was "service." For Lethaby, it was wrong to be concerned (as Fry was) with appearance in art.⁴¹²

Geoffrey Scott, via The Architecture of Humanism, is widely acknowledged for his success in attacking Lethaby's aesthetic positions. Scott's views represent a key body of early twentieth century English architectural thought which was at odds with Lethaby's.⁴¹³ The winning over of others by Scott as to the embracing of classical tradition is illustrated in the comparison of two remarks by Lethaby's friend Lawrence Weaver. Weaver was editor of Country Life magazine when he wrote c.1905-1909 (under Country Life's auspices) Volume I and II of the influential Small Country Houses of Today, in which one of Lethaby's works was featured. A Ruskinian approach can be noticed in Volume I in a comment Weaver used in his commentary in describing Lethaby's house, "The Hurst": "The dreadful over-finished state of most houses is due perhaps more to a lack of moral fiber than to a double dose of original sin in

⁴¹⁰ "What Should We Call Beautiful" (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 159. Blastism or Vorticism was England's version, led by such people as Wyndham Lewis, of Italian Futurism.

⁴¹¹ Ibid. Bell's "significant form" was also mentioned by Lethaby in a more neutral way in 1921 in his series in The Builder, "Modernism and Design," Part X: "Planning, Composition and Block-forms," CXXI, 7 Oct., p. 451.

⁴¹² Ibid., p. 157. Fry, a participant in such Arts and Crafts-related activities as the AWG sometimes earned Lethaby's approval also, for example, in "Modernism and Design" (1921), The Builder, Part XII: "Architectural Theory and Building Practice," 2 Dec., p. 750.

⁴¹³ Ward, for example, in an appraisal of Lethaby in the R.I.B.A.J. (1957), "The Whole Man" (part of "William Richard Lethaby 1857-1931—A Symposium in Honour of his Centenary," 3rd series, Vol. 64, No. 6, April, p. 222), submitted that Scott had laid bare the fallacies that affected Lethaby, for example the "romantic medievalism" of Ruskin and Morris. Lethaby's thinking versus Scott's is more fully discussed in Chapter VI. Here, is only desired to note the effect of Scott as one of Lethaby's critics.

Lethaby was once close to another enthusiast of the resumption of a classicizing approach in early twentieth century architecture, Reginald Blomfield. When Blomfield was active in Arts and Crafts circles in the 1890s, he wrote a book which Lethaby found sympathy with (see Leadwork, 1893, op.cit., p. 106) in which he referred to a book Blomfield publ. the previous year, The Formal Garden, co-authored with Brian Thomas.

matters artistic.”⁴¹⁴ But in Vol. II (second series, 1919), which Weaver also wrote, Lethaby is barely mentioned. Weaver observed then that not too far in the past architectural fashion (although in reality just the small portion of it under the sway of Arts and Crafts theory) was inclined to lay undue stress on the craftsman. But, he said, too much insistence on local tradition (as Arts and Crafts practitioners stressed) was bad. Pressed to its logical conclusion, he said, “it would exclude all Renaissance motifs and... throw us back on an affected medievalism.”⁴¹⁵ One might note also a related objection from 1921 when an unnamed combatant took Lethaby to task specifically in the pages of *The Builder*. In “A Grain of Mustard Seed,” it was said that one should not criticize the classicizing current in architecture because it stands for all the traditional elements and that Lethaby has offered nothing with which to replace these. These “hereditary” motifs, the writer said, should not be thrown out.⁴¹⁶

Lethaby’s Viewpoint Linked to that of Foreign Writers and Practitioners

A point of dissimilarity between Lethaby’s thinking and Croce’s has already been mentioned. French writers were also brought up in Lethaby’s writings and notes in ways indicating various views in common. Lethaby took the trouble to read the thoughts of such a doctrinaire French theorist as Durand, as indicated in the pages of an 1886 sketchbook. Of course, in the 1880s, besides his work in Shaw’s office, Lethaby was attending architectural classes at the Royal Academy and undergoing exposure to such French-trained academicians as Richard Phené Spiers (1838-1916). Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) was pointed out in the next decade as another, besides himself, who saw that past methods

⁴¹⁴Weaver, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

⁴¹⁵Weaver, Vol. II, as quoted from the 2nd series, 1919, p. 115.

⁴¹⁶“Modernism and Design,” *The Builder*, 11 Feb., 1921, p. 185. Lethaby, with all his reliance on Ruskin’s and Morris’ view of society could also be attacked from the “progressive” wing of current architectural thought. A reply occasioned by Lethaby’s refusal (6 March, 1924) to accept the R.I.B.A. Gold Medal, and publ. in the *R.I.B.A.J.* in 1924 (Lethaby file, R.I.B.A. Library, London) accused Lethaby of being opposed to “modern civilisation itself...” (exact date of publ. and the author not avail.)

were better than those of the present.⁴¹⁷ A French writer better known to the general public, Victor Hugo, was favorably mentioned by Lethaby on several occasions, sometimes in regard to his views on preservation.⁴¹⁸ Among younger French architects, de Baudot was cited for his nineteenth century exploration of the use of reinforced concrete in architecture. Le Corbusier's name was brought up on occasion, with a mixed reception given to the Swiss architect's point of view.⁴¹⁹ Lethaby gave an example illustrating positive connections between the two men, that he was in agreement with an article by Le Corbusier on the importance of engineering.⁴²⁰

Among Lethaby's German contemporaries, the architect Hermann Muthesius, a leader of the Deutscher Werkbund, who Lethaby may very likely would have known, displayed in such publications as Das englische Haus (1905-11) his thorough sympathy for Arts and Crafts developments to England. Muthesius appeared in a friendly context in Lethaby's biographical series on Webb in The Builder (1925).⁴²¹ The German economist Friedrich Naumann, who also had important ties to the Deutscher Werkbund, enjoyed Lethaby's admiration as well. The Deutscher Werkbund, under Muthesius' leadership and influenced by Naumann, was itself looked on kindly, as in a 1915 address Lethaby made to the Arts and Crafts Society.⁴²² While the Austrian architect Adolph Loos' name does not appear in the body of

⁴¹⁷Leadwork, (1893), op.cit., p. 36. Viollet-le-duc's name surfaces in other places in Lethaby's writing as well, especially from the 1890s (and presented in various lights). A more negative reference is to be found in his book review "How They Restore," Architectural Review, 5, Dec. 1898, p. 14 (a review of Emil Hovelague's Comment on Restaure Versailles.)

⁴¹⁸For example, see "The Preservation of Ancient Architecture," a paper given by Lethaby at an architectural conference in 1906, as found in Form in... (1922), op.cit., pp. 237-238 and "How They Restore," op.cit.

⁴¹⁹Re: J.-E.-A. de Baudot (1836-1918), see "Modernism and Design" (1921), Part IV: "French and English Education," The Builder, 1 April, 1921, p. 409; Re: Le Corbusier, see "Modernism and Design," Part X: "Planning, Composition and Block Form," 7 Oct., 1921, The Builder, p. 452. See also the reference Lethaby made to Le Corbusier in 1929 (a more ambivalent appraisal) in "Architecture as Engineering," 1 Feb., The Builder, p. 252

⁴²⁰Part X of "Modernism and Design": "Planning, Composition and Block-Form," The Builder, 4 Oct., 1921, p. 452.

⁴²¹See 1935 book version, Philip Webb, op.cit., p. 165n. Muthesius is also mentioned in the obituary Lethaby wrote for Cecil Brewer (Sept., 1918, R.I.B.A.J., p. 246.)

⁴²²See "Political Economy or Productive Economy" (1915), as repr. in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 197 (orig. date of address 23 Nov., 1915).

Lethaby's works examined by this author, such statements as the one Lethaby made in Architecture (1911), that ornament "belongs to the infancy of the world" and his linking of arguments about architectural ornament to tattooing makes one wonder if he was familiar with Loos' similar argument made a few years earlier.⁴²³ Among those writing on art and history in the German language, Wilhelm Worringer was apparently well regarded by Lethaby, and certainly Josef Strzygowski.⁴²⁴

Writing of the clairvoyance of Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris on the subject of labor and humanity, Lethaby added the name of the Russian writer to the list of those he seems to have most respected: "only Tolstoi, I think, of modern men may have seen these things [perceptions about labor and humanity] with like clearness." Tolstoi had read Lethaby's Morris as Workmaster in 1903 and Lethaby had read some of Tolstoi's work by at least 1905.⁴²⁵ Of non-Europeans, Gandhi's outlook was also admired. He was included in a list of "venerables" along with Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris, and Tolstoi in 1926.⁴²⁶ The Italian writer on aesthetics, Benedetto Croce is also encountered in Lethaby's writings.⁴²⁷ Among American writers, John Dewey was commended for appreciating "what labour means in life" and, Lethaby said he had a "far-sightedness" akin to that of Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris and Tolstoi.⁴²⁸

⁴²³Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 repr., op.cit., p. 188. See Loos' Ornament und Verbrechen (published essay, 1908). This work was first publ. in Vienna but only reached a wider audience through repub. in the avant-garde German publication Der Sturm in 1912, a year after publ. of Lethaby's Architecture and only in the year following, i.e. 1913, in the French Les Cahiers d'Aujourd'hui, did it reach a wide international audience.

⁴²⁴Re: Worringer: Lethaby quoted from the former's Form in Gothic in his series "Architecture, Nature, and Magic" (1928) in The Builder, as found in 1956 book version, op.cit., p. 146; re: Strzygowski, see Lethaby's "Modernism and Design," The Builder, Part X: "Planning, Composition and Block Form," 7 Oct., 1921, cxxi, p. 450.

⁴²⁵Scripts and Scraps (1956), op.cit., n.d., p. 36, orig. date of Lethaby's words not given. Re: the 1903 date, see Viola Meynell, ed., Friends of a Lifetime, 1940, p. 81; re: the 1905 date: see Lethaby's letter to (Sir) Sydney Cockerell, 25 Sept., 1905, (Sidney Cockerell/Lethaby correspondence, Vol. 1 of 3, #52730 (Vol. 108)—1894-1908, British Museum, Dept. of Manuscripts). Other favorable references to Tolstoi occur in Lethaby's writings. For example, in "What Shall We Call Beautiful" (1918), as repr. in Form in ... (1922), op.cit., p. 159.

⁴²⁶"Industry and the Notion of Art," Seventh Annual Lecture Conference on Industrial Welfare, Balliol College, Oxford, 10 Sept., 1926. As publ., p. 34. (7-page excerpt of Lethaby's address.)

⁴²⁷For example, in "What Shall We Call..."(1918), as repr. in Form in ...(1920), op.cit., p.158.

⁴²⁸Scripts and Scraps (1956), op.cit., pp. 36-37. (Orig. date of Lethaby's words not given.)

Summary

In this chapter Lethaby's appraisal of (and particularly his criticism of) the state of architecture in his time has been discussed. This exposition is a necessary step in the process of understanding the contribution of Lethaby's theory in the subject areas considered in Chapters III through XV. Also, in this chapter, Lethaby's overview of architectural history and some details of his appraisal of each period have been discussed since his view of the past had a direct bearing on his ideas about issues in architecture and related activities in his own time. With this information in mind, it is best next to try to get a better understanding of the most elemental "building blocks" in Lethaby's architectural vocabulary, to learn more about what Lethaby meant, for example, by "architecture" and "design." A discussion of these terms as understood by Lethaby will play an important role (as will the chapter just ending) in understanding Lethaby's point of view with reference to the various subjects to be discussed in Chapter IV and following.

CHAPTER III

DEFINITIONS

Introduction

The other early step in an orderly analysis of Lethaby's thought should be a discussion of how Lethaby defined the most basic, elemental terms in his architectural philosophy—what is architecture and what are architects? Some idea of Lethaby's handling of such terms will be useful before proceeding to the more particular discussions of subsequent chapters. Lethaby's understanding of several other general terms—beauty, art and design—will be discussed here as additional elemental building blocks usable in discussing Lethaby's architectural philosophy in more detail.

It should be re-iterated here that Lethaby developed no organized aesthetic system although criticism pertaining to the visual arts in general and to architecture in particular was a major activity for Lethaby and one upon which his reputation as a key figure in modern English architecture substantially rests. Lethaby seems to have felt that a comprehensive, consistent aesthetic system wasn't needed in order to enhance the efficacy of his views. Although he himself was a prominent architectural critic, he frequently denigrated this occupation, cautioning against too unquestioning an acceptance of the opinions of critics and questioning the essential "worthwhileness" of criticism as a vocational activity. Aesthetics were..."blither and bunkum about bugaboo!"¹

Without a coordinated aesthetic system or theory it is less than surprising that a few inconsistencies and contradictions would creep into Lethaby's thinking. The passage of time, with accompanying changes in conditions and changing perceptions accounts, of course, for a portion of these inconsistencies and contradictions but beyond that a certain "looseness" can be noticed in Lethaby's thinking which does not seem to be attributable only to the changes-of-mind that occur as time passes. As with his architectural thinking as a whole, so with his definitions of terms, Lethaby apparently did not feel a need for unrelenting consistency. This is not to say that, on the whole, Lethaby did not hold strongly to certain

¹ Powell, "The Wit and Wisdom..." The Builder, January 15, 1932, (no original date given), p. 132

values and beliefs. His subscription to the body of ideas propounded by Ruskin, Morris and Webb—the formulation of Arts and Crafts “philosophy”—continued with little emendation right to the end.

Lethaby, in explaining terms like “architecture,” rotated before the eye of his reader or listener various important attributes which he felt the term to be defined should have. Lethaby’s definitions are usually quite short, and while they do seem to aim at “definition,” there is often the impact of the aphorism. Thus in Lethaby’s writing, one never encounters more than a short explanation of terms—a definition in which one of the term’s principal ingredients or attributes is equated with the term itself. This results, over the many years of Lethaby’s writing activity, in many different “definitions” of, for example, “architecture.” It is likely that these short, pithy “mini-lessons” stuck in the minds of Lethaby’s readers more firmly than a more exhaustive discussion of a term’s attributes could have.

Despite his avoidance of formal aesthetic systems (i.e., the philosophy of beauty), Lethaby did, on a few occasions offer a word or two on the character of “beauty.”² In Lethaby’s pamphlet About Beauty (1928), one senses some of the echoes of the Fabian viewpoint in his implication of a confidence that Man can as a group, devise a system for his own governance superior to what individual Man, motivated by ego, might tend toward: “Beauty always relates to value (human, not money) and quality. The beautiful is not so much that which people think they desire for themselves, it is rather that which they ought to desire for the common good.”³

In Architecture (1911), Lethaby suggested that beauty must be thought of as a “by-product” in art, not directly sought after in its own right.⁴ Further, in the same work, he stressed the dependence of beauty, in architecture at least, on other desirable attributes: “...an external form of beauty cannot be reached and demonstrated other than as the sum of many obviously desirable qualities...durability,

² The reason for a general paucity of attention to defining this term in Lethaby’s writing is perhaps hinted at in his 1916 essay “The Need for Beauty” (repr. in Form in... in 1922) in which Lethaby comments that “Beauty has been ground to dust in contradictory theories of Aesthetics.” (p. 145, Form in Civilization.)

³ Written for the City of Birmingham Central School of Arts and Crafts.

⁴ Architecture (1911), 1955 ed., pp. 158-159.

spaciousness, order, masterly construction, etc....there is no beauty beyond these...”⁵ “Beauty” was not an abstract, independent thing.⁶

Art and Design

Lethaby frequently spoke of Architecture as belonging to the arts.⁷ His comment then on what “art” is, can be utilized to some extent, to learn more about what he thought “architecture” is, and a few of these views on the broader subject are included here. An early comment (1890) stresses the universality of art—especially in the sense of its being non-elitist: “But art is universal; to give up one corner of the field is to destroy the fair harvest; it is which plait the straw finial on the wheat stacks of the homestead as well as points the proudest steeple.”⁸ Later (1916), one finds a similar idea. Art is “many-sided...without the flood of common art you cannot have the crest of genius...”⁹ Both “aesthetics” and “aesthetic intention” are warned against in Architecture (1911): “Taste, caprice, pomposity and make-believe are no true artmasters. All formulas, codes and grammars [e.g. Owen Jones’ Grammar of Ornament?] are diseases which only show themselves in a time of impaired vitality.”¹⁰ And: “Aesthetic intention” is destructive. No art can long outlast it....”¹¹

⁵ Ibid., (1911), p. 185.

⁶ See also Lethaby’s Introduction to De L’Hôpital’s book on Westminster Cathedral, p. 3.

⁷ See Lethaby’s comment on the drifting apart of architecture, painting, and sculpture, quoted by John Brandon-Jones in Artifex, Vol. 4, p. 52 (“After William Morris”), 1970. The exact relationship of architecture to the other arts varies from comment to comment in Lethaby’s writing, e.g., in 1924, (Gimson, p.7) he says (agreeing with Morris) that all forms of decorative art are part of architecture and only have meaning in relation to the “mistress” art. Also, architecture is the “centre of gravity” of the crafts (“Cast Iron...,” Journal of the Society of Arts (1890, p.2) or, a few years later: “Architecture is the centre of gravity of the crafts in combination” (1897), “Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades,” Technical Education Congress, p. 851, July 23, 1897.)

⁸ “Cast Iron,” Journal of the Society of the Arts, February 1890, p. 273.

⁹ “The Need for Beauty” (1916), repr. in Form in..., p. 144.

¹⁰ Architecture (1911), 1955 ed., p. 9.

¹¹ Ibid., (1911), p. 187.

Practicality was also important in Lethaby's concept of art. "Great art, like great science, is the discovery of necessity."¹² And similarly, "Most simply and generally, art may be thought of as the well-doing of what needs doing."¹³ Lethaby objected to removing art from concepts of service and work—to the modern tendency to limit "art" to a sphere of activity, free of "direct service."¹⁴ Art "was not some high essence which might lead to aesthetic excitement, but simply any sound and complete form of human work."¹⁵ Other characteristics of "art" were set up as inseparable dualities. Art was "substance" as well as "expression," "labour" as well as "emotion," "service" as well as "delight."¹⁶ Art was equated with quality also: "Art is the element of good quality in all production."¹⁷

The immediately preceding characterizations obtain from Lethaby's writings of the second decade of the last century. From the third decade, additional explanations of art are offered. Quoting from Ruskin in his series on Philip Webb in The Builder, Lethaby stressed the "work" connection in art in a different way. Art "should be right labour"—the kind of labour men take pleasure in we can call art. It is this expression of man's pleasure in labour.¹⁸ The emphasis here involves the producer of art even more than the perceiver. For Lethaby, the importance of individual genius is also diminished: "Art is essentially a social activity and it requires cross-fertilization. No one individual is sufficient ground for it to spring

¹² Ibid., p. 16, 155 ed. See also: "Art is not shape and appearance, it is fine response to noble requirement...." (The Wit..., The Builder, January 22, 1932, p. 175, original date of comment not given, or: "Art is the well doing of what needs doing: the right aim is doing necessary things beautifully..." ("The Wit...", The Builder, January 22, 1932, p. 175, original date of comment not given.)

¹³ "Art and Workmanship" (1913), repr. in Form in (1922), p. 208.

¹⁴ "The Foundation in Labour" (1917), repr. in Form in (1922), p. 215.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 214. Or vice versa, as quoted by R.S. Weir from Lethaby's Form in Civilization in the "Vote of Thanks" section (p.21) of "W.R. Lethaby—An Impression and a Tribute," R.I.B.A. Journal, Vol. 39. Paper read to the R.I.B.A. February 1932: "The best way to think of labour is as art" (Weir attributed this thought initially to Ruskin and Morris.)

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁷ "Ruskin, Defeat or Victory," (1919) reprinted in Form and Civilization, p. 196.

¹⁸ Philip Webb, 1935 book version, op.cit., p. 5. (Originally published serially in The Builder, 1925.)

from and flourish.”¹⁹ But, while generally cautioning against originality for originality’s sake, Lethaby conceded that “A true work of art always has something of surprising freshness.”²⁰ In Lethaby’s study of Webb also, he maintained that “...all the greatest art preserved some strand of primitive frankness and an element of wonder”—something beyond the purely rational.²¹

As to distinctions between “art” and “science” Lethaby offered: “Art is what you do...Science is what you know.”²² His resistance to including machines as legitimately adjunct to the artistic process continues quite late (1926) when, in a letter to his friend Harry Peach, Lethaby maintained that art cannot involve the machine.²³ Art is also a kind of pleasure: “Art consists precisely in introducing into our works a kind of continuous happiness.”²⁴

In Lethaby’s comments on “design” one finds some emphases similar to those encountered in his statements about “art.” Acknowledgement of the maker’s importance appears in his early book Leadwork (1893)—all true design must have a “personality” expressing itself in it.²⁵ Excessive emphasis on originality is also mentioned—design is not “strange originality.”²⁶ Design should be widespread: it doesn’t require genius.²⁷ It is “not the agony of contortion.”²⁸ Similarly:

The faculty for design has been allowed to fall into disuse and decay under the supposition that it is a special ‘gift’ only to be exercised by a sort of ‘inspiration.’ Few people like to

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 233.

²⁰ “The Wit...,” The Builder, January 8, 1932, p. 53. (Original date of comment not given.)

²¹ Philip Webb (1935), op.cit., p. 129. (Orig. 1925 as a series in The Builder.)

²² “Housing and Furnishing,” (1920) repr. in Form in..., (1922) p.38.

²³ Lethaby to Peach, p. 4 of a letter written in late 1926.

²⁴ Lethaby quoting from Albalat; repr. in “The Wit...,” The Builder, January 8, 1932, p.53.

²⁵ Leadwork, (1893) pp. 4-5.

²⁶ “Design and Industry,” (1915), repr. in Form in..., (1922) p. 49.

²⁷ “Craftwork and Art” (1921), Intro by Lethaby to Catalog of the Exhibition (Oct., 1921), Red Rose Guild of Artworkers, pp. 4-5. Exhibit held in Manchester.

²⁸ “Art and Workmanship,” (1913) repr. in Form in..., p. 211.

claim inspiration so designing has tended to fall into the hands of a little band of ‘experts.’ Everyone really has the designing—the contriving experimenting—instinct...²⁹

As with art, “design is linked with quality”—“true design...an inseparable element of good quality...”³⁰ Lethaby emphasized the practical side of design—“...a reasonable definition of ‘design’ would be:...Deciding how materials shall be used and workmanship done.”³¹ Similarly, taking a swipe at copyists:

Design...may best be thought of as arranging how work would be done; and the possibilities of arrangement are to be explored by experiment. The designing faculty is properly the same or closely akin to the experimenting and inventive faculty. What we have called ‘design’ has hardly been invention at all, but rather mutation, which in some cases has aimed at the illusion of antiquity as if an artist were a forger.³²

In an undated manuscript, “Colouring,” Lethaby argues that design is “sufficient knowledge of a craft and new combinations for new occasions.”³³

Architecture and Building

In “Architecture as Engineering,” Lethaby enumerated some of the ways in which he would like to look at architecture. He would consider architecture “...as Building, as Geometry, as Workmanship, as Climate and Material Conditions, as Adventure, as Mind and Spirit, as Sociology, as Humanity.”³⁴ The list makes one wish for some supplemental words of explanation to explain a bit more about these various ways of looking at architecture but the enumeration is really only a proviso preceding a discussion of architecture as “engineering.” In “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920) Lethaby drew on ancient precedent in reaching the conclusion that, while architecture may be an art it must not be considered one

²⁹ Red Rose Guild Pamphlet Craftwork and Art, September 29, 1921, pp.4-5.

³⁰ Introduction to Woodcarving by George Jack, 1903, p. ii.

³¹ “Modernism and Design” (Part III), The Builder, March 4, 1921, p. 285.

³² “Modernism and Design” (Part V), The Builder, May 6, 1921, p. 591.

³³ Colouring (n.d.), MS (Barnstaple), p. 17.

³⁴ “Architecture as Engineering” (1929), The Builder, 1 Feb., p. 252.

of the fine arts since they, the “Fine Arts” are, by definition, free from human need.³⁵ Referring to one ancient source, he observed that Aristotle had ruled Architecture out of this group.³⁶ But in a reference to Plato to the effect that “fine” arts do have a function, some confusion is created.³⁷

“Need” as a prerequisite of architecture is emphasized several times in Architecture (1911). Architecture is based on 1) need, 2) desires, 3) tradition—but a little earlier in the book “need” is identified as the first prerequisite of architecture.³⁸ One cannot design “outside need.”³⁹ Architecture grows out of a particular purpose.⁴⁰ “Taste” is not architecture but “hardness, facts, experiment” are.⁴¹ All this is somewhat against the grain of a pronouncement at the beginning of Lethaby’s first book, Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), in which he states that the essentials of architecture are not utilitarian.⁴²

Another way in which Lethaby’s comment of the 1890’s differs from later ones concern the relationship of “architecture” and “building.” In Architecture, Mysticism and Myth he submits that these two entities are not the same, that they are, rather, related like “the soul and the body.”⁴³ In this early period, unlike later, Lethaby seems to have been of two minds, however. In the 1890 article “Cast Iron” he indicates his difference of opinion with the historian Fergusson who maintained, apparently, that

³⁵ “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920), as repr. in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 8.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Architecture (1911), pp. 11 and 15. See also “...the first great need of all architecture is need itself.” (p. 9)

³⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁴¹ Friends of a Lifetime, Meynell (ed.) p. 130. Lethaby to S. Cockerell, October 7, 1907.

⁴² Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), p. 1.

⁴³ Ibid.

architecture and building are different.⁴⁴ But in 1897, Lethaby wrote that there was no distinction between architecture and building.⁴⁵

The following decades show more uniformity of stance on this issue, however. In the book, Architecture, the terms are used interchangeably and a number of phrases assert that “building” and “architecture” should be considered the same. For example: “It is impossible to differentiate architecture from building and probably we shall not find any need for so doing it if we realize how truly interesting are builders and buildings...”⁴⁶ Or: architecture is not something beyond “mere essentials of building—there is nothing beyond this.”⁴⁷ Further, architecture is not “decorated” or “romantic” building. The tendency to look at architecture this way, comes about Lethaby wrote, because the word architecture is “high” and “poetic.”⁴⁸ For Lethaby, architecture is the practical art of building, not only in the past, but now and in the future.⁴⁹ From a bit later in the decade (1918); “we have been betrayed by the mysteries of the word architecture. It is only building.”⁵⁰

In the 1920s, Lethaby continued to comment occasionally about the identical character of “architecture” and “building,” as in the “Modernism of Design” series (1921) in The Builder and in the series on Webb (1925) in the same publication.⁵¹ In private letters also, such as the one he wrote to Harry Peach in the 1920s, this congruency is brought up.⁵² Also, in the typescript “Origins” one finds:

⁴⁴ “Cast Iron,” Journal of the Society of Arts, 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁵ “Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trading.” (Technical Education Congress), July 23, 1897, as found in the Journal of the Royal Society, XIV, 1897, p. 851.

⁴⁶ Architecture (1911), p. 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ “Towns to Live In” (1918), repr. in Form in..., p.3.

⁵¹ “Modernism and Design” (1921), The Builder, p7, and The Builder, 1925, p. 81.

⁵² This comment from an undated letter (found in the 1920s folder at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection) is in regard to Peach’s daughter training to be an architect.

The word ‘architecture’ is best explained as meaning the act of building. If an attempt is made to set up any distinction between architecture and building many difficulties arise. Only big and outlying erections will claim the grander word. Or, if we try to make beauty the test, it might lead to the discovery that architecture was the work of older builders but not of modern architects.⁵³

Lethaby did permit himself one area of departure from a position establishing absolute equivalency between “architecture” and “building.” In the “Architecture of Adventure” (1910), after saying that “architecture” is really just “ordinary customary buildings...,” he suggested that a separate meaning is possible—that architecture is building enhanced by sculpture and painting.⁵⁴ He attributed this view to Morris—citing the latter’s teaching that architecture is building “completely finished.”⁵⁵ Lethaby seems to have it both ways here—either architecture and building are identical or architecture is building enriched by the other arts. A similar idea is expressed in Architecture where Lethaby stated that architecture in which the other arts are successfully integrated is the “best” architecture.⁵⁶ More like the dual view of 1910 is a passage in “Modernism and Design” (1921) which stated that “good building...is one of the great primary arts, it is one with architecture,” but goes on to say that if one wants to distinguish good building from architecture, that architecture combines the other arts.⁵⁷

Lethaby offered several descriptions of architecture emphasizing construction and the construction process. In 1892: “Architecture is the easy and expressive handling of materials in masterly experimental building—it is the craftsman’s drama;” in 1911: “A true architecture is the discovery of the nature of

⁵³ TS “Origins” (Barnstaple), p. 1. Similarly, in another TS: “an architectural factor can never be separated from a residuum of mere building for such ‘mere building’ has never had an existence, and we might as well try to isolate the beauty of a bird’s nest from its utility...” (“Medieval Architecture,” TS, Barnstaple, n.d., p. 1)

⁵⁴ “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), repr. in Form in..., pp. 66-67.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Architecture (1911), p. 6.

⁵⁷ “Modernism and Design” (Part XI, “Function, Finish and Fitness,”) The Builder, November 4, 1921, p. 609. See also: “...the highest architecture is likely to have fit sculpture and painting integrally bound up with it.” (“The Wit...” The Builder, Powell (ed.), January 8, 1932, p. 53.

things in building...”⁵⁸ In “modernism and Design” (1921) Lethaby described Architecture as “...an active art, a drill, a handling of matter and weight, a co-ordinate of workmanship, its being is doing.”⁵⁹

Structure in particular lay near the essence of architecture for Lethaby. In a definition of architecture recorded in an 1884 sketchbook, structure was given the emphasis—ornament was allowable in architecture, but secondary.⁶⁰ In “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910) Lethaby discussed three theories of architecture: either 1) it is something revealed once (in classical art) or in two forms—Greek and Gothic, or 2) it has as its essences “proportion,” so that an absolute architecture could be realized through its discovery or 3) architecture is primarily building according to the law of structure and need. Lethaby, of course, rejected the first two and embraced the third, emphasizing that essentially “architecture is still structure.”⁶¹ Subsequent instances of this vein of thought occur in “The Spirit of Rome and our Modern Problem in Architecture” (1917): “...I would define Architecture as properly being a developing structural art...” and, “if we could rename the art of building into architecture and structure it might clear our minds.”⁶²

On the importance of form, Lethaby wrote in an 1884 sketchbook: “Architecture consists distinctively in the adaptation of form to resist force.”⁶³ Later (1911), architectural forms are described as “nothing in themselves, they are only envelopes of the spirit of architecture.”⁶⁴ Symbolism is also

⁵⁸ 1892, Lethaby’s essay “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman,” Architecture- A Profession or an Art, p. 151, and Architecture (1911), pp. 159-160 (1955 edition.)

⁵⁹ “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, 1921, Part I, p. 3. Other similar sources include one from Powell’s collection of Lethaby’s thoughts, “the Wit...,” The Builder, January 8, 1932, p. 53: “Good architecture is masterly construction with adequate craftsmanship.” John Brandon-Jones, in his 1970 article in Artifex quotes from part of the program of the 1904 architectural education syllabus of the R.I.B.A. (appearing in 1906-07 and largely authored by Lethaby) as singling out construction as the basis of architecture (p. 55).

⁶⁰ Sketchbook dated December, 1884 (at Barnstaple).

⁶¹ “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 89.

⁶² Architectural Review, Vol. XLI, January 1917, p. 3. See also, “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920), repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 6-7, and “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, Part XII, December 2, 1921.

⁶³ Sketchbook dated December 1884 (Barnstaple).

⁶⁴ Architecture (1911), 1955 ed., p. 78.

important to architecture. In Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892) he conveyed his agreement with César Daly to the effect that to have “interesting” architecture we must have symbolism.⁶⁵ In “Architecture, Nature and Magic” (1928), Lethaby still referred to architecture as “symbolism” and in one of Alfred Powell’s collected sayings by Lethaby one finds: “All architecture—that is all that is worth the name, is one vast symbolism. Symbolism controlled by and expressed in structure might be the definition of Architecture.”⁶⁶

Lethaby sometimes gave architecture a definition emphasizing broader implications than that pertaining to individual buildings. In “Architecture and Modern Life” (1917) Lethaby described it as dealing with “civilization,” with “towns”—in fact, architecture was “primarily the art of building cities.”⁶⁷ From the same year (“The Spirit of Rome and our Modern Problem in Architecture”) one finds the observation that architecture is “essentially a public art which presents the public spirit of its time...”⁶⁸ It is civic spirit. Architecture is really not the abstract lines and curves of surfaces: “it is the builded evidence of spirit and life of pride.”⁶⁹ Architecture is “folk art,” “defined by common instinct” and “the whole building work of a time or country” is a language...the only one I think in which one cannot lie.”⁷⁰ Architecture could not be the “art of classical quotation;” “it is a current speech.”⁷¹ The root of architecture is the land—the site and local trades and materials are respected.⁷² Lethaby’s definition of architecture then, emphasized need of practicability, the building and structural arts. Architecture could be

⁶⁵ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), p. 7.

⁶⁶ 1928 quote (originally from The Builder) from 1965 book version. Powell quote from Scripts and Scraps (n.d.), p. 19.

⁶⁷ Repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 112-113.

⁶⁸ Architectural Review, Vol. XLI, p. 4.

⁶⁹ “The Spirit of Rome and our Modern Problem in Architecture,” p. 3.

⁷⁰ First quote is from “Of the Motive,” AA Notes (1889), p. 3; second quote is from The Builder, 1925, originally, and reprinted in the volume Philip Webb (1935), p. 14; third quote is from Scripts and Scraps, p. 32, n.d.

⁷¹ “Architecture as Form in Civilization,” (1920) repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 10.

⁷² Philip Webb (1935), p. 14, originally published serially in The Builder (1925).

symbolic and was the accurate expression of its culture. With his emphasis on the worker and the work ethic, Lethaby's ideas are clearly rooted in Ruskin's teaching to such an extent that Sir Reginald Blomfield was prompted to write that Lethaby, under the influence of Ruskin's thought, was led "...to translate architecture and the arts into terms of a generous if quite impossible socialism."⁷³

Earlier it was shown the equivalency, for Lethaby, of "architecture" with "building." In some instances the same ideas as those associated with Lethaby's definition of architecture can be found expressed without mention of that word. For example in his book Architecture, "building" is described as being concerned with society in a wide context—the art of building is concerned not only with single structures but with cities, and hence whole countries.⁷⁴ Also, as in the pronouncements on architecture such as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, buildings not only express their purpose but also the correct moral attitude associated with that purpose.⁷⁵ Buildings may be "practical, mystical, magical" but these qualities cannot be imparted to a building consciously—they either are or are not in the people and their age.⁷⁶ While Lethaby was one of the first modern architects to emphasize the "mystical" possibilities of architecture and a consideration of architecture in its larger-than-a-single-building urban context, he was not unaware of the traditional requisites of successful construction. In an 1886 sketchbook, one finds Lethaby noting down three conditions of building—Commodity, Firmness, and Delight.⁷⁷

Architects

Architects, as the term was understood in Lethaby's day, were not necessary for the production of architecture and were, in fact detrimental to it. "There will be no architecture while there are architects. The architectural myth is a tremendous disease of snobbery, all hidden and entrenched behind 'gifts' and

⁷³ "W.R. Lethaby—An Impression and a Tribute," R.I.B.A. Journal, 1932, Vol. 39, p. 8 (read February 1932 before the R.I.B.A.)

⁷⁴ Architecture (1911), pp. 9-10 (1955 ed.)

⁷⁵ Philip Webb (1935) p. 129 (originally in The Builder, (1925).

⁷⁶ "The Architecture of Adventure," (1910), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 92.

⁷⁷ 1886 Sketchbook, p. 9 (Barnstaple).

art talk, assumptions, beliefs, and ‘eminence.’ ”⁷⁸ But architects did exist, and Lethaby for the most part tried to advise what they should be since the calling could not very well be obliterated.

In the 1890s Lethaby’s description of the architect seemed to be aimed at rejecting those activities deemed “professional” and re-integrating the architect into what was understood to be the hierarchical, familial concept of the building industry in medieval days. In 1891 Lethaby wrote: “What an architect does object to is the view that he is a building policeman, laid on to see that the contractor does not cheat. He believes (should believe) that the contractor does not cheat. He believes that each trade must be responsible for its own honor, and that the present system of antagonism will lapse.”⁷⁹ In 1893, nearer the height of the Professionalism controversy in England (a subject to be discussed more in detail later in the chapter) Lethaby wrote in Leadwork that “the architect’s relation to his work should be more like that of painters and sculptors to theirs and, that the architect should be a craftsman, not a businessman of professional.”⁸⁰ In “Cast Iron” (1890), Lethaby had suggested that the crafts should re-absorb the architect, and called for more interaction between the architect and the craftsman.⁸¹

Some of Lethaby’s best, later characterizations of the architect’s role come from the 1920s: “Architects are arrangers and directors of certain kinds of structures.”⁸² More specifically, “an architect should be a general in a work army—bold, trustworthy, and quick in making new combinations. Paper generals are no good; they must have field experience.”⁸³ In his series on Webb in The Builder of 1925, Lethaby equated the term architect with that of master-builder.⁸⁴ In the same series, he criticized the current role played by architects:

⁷⁸ Scrips and Scraps (1957), p. 19, original date of Lethaby’s remark not given.

⁷⁹ “Architectural Examinations,” A.A. Notes, Vol. V, No. 5, May 1891, p. 116.

⁸⁰ Leadwork (1893), pp. 4-5.

⁸¹ “Cast Iron,” Journal of the Society of Arts (1890), p. 2.

⁸² “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 12.

⁸³ “Modernism and Design,” Part I, The Builder, January 7, 1921, p. 136.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

The professional architect sits far from his work, writing and answering letters more than half his time. What does he know of the suggestions offered by the handling of material? The profession of architecture is an absurdity, and the sooner the cobwebs that surround it are swept away the better. Any man whose calling is to design buildings and carry them out is an architect, a master builder, and artist: and he owes it to Society to do it well and beautifully. The distinction between architect and builder is purely conventional and should disappear. Even the contractor, the purveyor of labour, is not so far removed from actual building as we architects...⁸⁵

A bit further he conceded:

It may of course be recognized that the modern city practice of an architect, with its complexities, necessarily tends toward the lawyer's mode of dealing with documents and legal precedents, but some way of maintaining contact with the basis of building must be found...the art of building [must be]...refounded on delight in structure, knowledge of materials, practice of craftsmanship, and the impulse towards experiment and invention.⁸⁶

Architects, Lethaby said in the same series are in face (or should be) experimenters, developers, adapters..." The architect is an inventor in building, not a supplier of tired or stale grandeurs in style...If they do their job right...[they] will invent as needs arise..."⁸⁷ Architects (as artists) owe a lot to themselves too, in terms of seeking satisfaction in their work. Andrew Saint described the lady client who talked to Lethaby (probably when he was in Shaw's office) and said (supposedly): "I can't see, Mr. Lethaby, that you have done a single thing I asked you to do." Lethaby replied: "Well, you see, my first duty as an artist is to please myself."⁸⁸ One gets the sense of a Fabian outlook in Lethaby's counsel of 1920 that architecture should be looked upon as "service" from the communal point of view."⁸⁹ Also, as

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Richard Norman Shaw, Andrew Saint, 1978, p. 145.

⁸⁹ "Architecture and Modern Life"(1920), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 120.(Orig. paper at Informal Conference at the R.I.B.A., 24 Jan., 1917.

architecture is an activity with wide implications, so architects must rise to this role and be “ministers of civilization rather than purveyors of whim.”⁹⁰

The 1890s in Great Britain, a schism emerged in the architectural profession with the controversy that developed over the proposal that the practice of architecture was a profession, the entry into which should be controlled by examination and subsequent registration. The Registration Bill was promoted in Parliament in 1891. It caused strains with the Institute of British Architects (now the R.I.B.A.) and it fragmented opinion among the members of the architectural profession as a whole. In March, 1891, sixty-nine architects and artists—Memorialists, they were called—sent a protest to the R.I.B.A. Other forms of protest included the collection of essays published in 1892 under the editorship of Lethaby’s former mentor Richard Norman Shaw and another prominent architect of the time, Thomas Graham Jackson. The essays, published under the title Architecture a Profession or an Art contained Lethaby’s protest “The Builders Art and the Craftsman.” Other essays in the collection expressed the anti-registration sentiments of the various contributors. A year earlier, Lethaby had already expressed in print some arguments against registration in the May, 1890, edition of the Architectural Association Notes. He argued there that architecture was an art and since art could not be taught, that made the examining process a difficult undertaking.⁹¹ Other opponents of the registration of architects included the members of the Art Worker’s Guild. As well, notable architects within the R.I.B.A. opposing registration, besides those already mentioned, included Arthur Blomfield, his nephew Reginald, G. Gilbert Scott (the Younger) and his brother John Oldrid Scott, F.W. Simpson, Charles Fergusson, J.J. Stevenson, W.D. Caroe, John Brydon and William Leiper. Outside the Institute, opponents included such highly regarded architects as William Butterfield, John Francis Bentley, Philip Webb and J.F. Bodley. Lethaby’s friends and associates Gerald Horsley, Mervin Macartney, Earnest Newton and E.S. Prior resigned from the Institute over the registration issue. Lethaby himself was not a member at the time.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ “Architectural Examinations,” Architectural Association Notes, May, 1890, p. 115. He also reasoned that the Institute already had an examination system of sorts so why develop it more.

Not all opposed registration for the same reasons but by 1892 the bill had been defeated, with registration not to be put into effect until the 1930s, after Lethaby's death. Despite the defeat, the Institute continued to experiment with associate memberships and also, in 1904, organized the Board of Architectural Education. This Board, which would have important effects on the nature of architectural education in Britain, benefited from the leadership of Lethaby, who brought himself to participate in this latter undertaking.

In his 1892 essay against registration in the Shaw/Jackson collection one can notice Lethaby linking professionalism with corporate structure rather than with the desired aims of architecture:

...the unhappy mean, which is the necessary result of seeking the welfare of a corporation rather than the advance of true art, --when people allow themselves to be 'certified' as architects because they have answered a number of more or less interesting, but non-the-less irrelevant questions,--it will be well to devote one's attention to design and workmanship in building, and to be able to do actual work as a building artist.⁹²

He observed in the same place, that architects could learn from those in other callings:

...wherever handicraft has not been intercepted from material by the intervention of a learned profession, work is still as perfectly beautiful as ever it was, be it the windmills of the mill-wrights, the fishing smacks of the ship-wrights, or the wains of the wagon builder...what we want are the housewrights—and let who will, play at the examinations in the art of passing examinations.⁹³

And finally, more pessimistically:

When the arts of building are all of them killed out finally, and the memory of their doing dead, who shall build them up again? Will being examined in architectural history, practicing a mechanical system of drawing, and acquiring the completest equipment of all the routine of the profession, give back to us the skill and delight of the craftsman?⁹⁴

⁹² "The Builder's Art and the Craftsman" in *Architecture, A Profession or an Art?*, R. Norman Shaw and Thomas Graham Jackson, eds., London: John Murray, 1892, p. 171.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁹⁴ "Architectural Examinations," *Architectural Association Notes*, May, 1890, pp.159-160. The best compliment Lethaby seems to have paid the prominent J. D. Sedding in his commentary about him in *Philip Webb* was that he tried to employ good craftsmen and was one himself, p. 8.

One of Lethaby's most prominent mentors, Philip Webb—the most important influence on Lethaby's thinking among practicing architects—continued to show his wariness of “professional” organizations even into the early years of the twentieth century, as this letter, written to his disciple at the inception of the Institute's Lethaby-led education program shows:

You know more of the component parts of the ‘stick phast’ body, the R.I.B.A. than I do; for being always afraid of ‘em, a wide berth was kept between us—much to the peace of mind of this poor party. If you and your colleagues in this matter (the professionalism-registration issue) think it possible to white-wash them in some way with your brushes and not in return be tarred with theirs, I quite think it would be well to (try). If that ‘body’ may be found not quite as black as my fancy paints them...⁹⁵

In the 1920s Lethaby continued an anti-professional bias in discussing architecture. In “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920) he warned that all arts suffer from professionalism.⁹⁶ In “Architecture as Engineering” (1929) he told of how both architects and engineers became “professional” about the mid-point of the nineteenth century and how this shutting off amateur activity had a sterilizing effect.⁹⁷ “All professions tend to develop into priesthoods.”⁹⁸

Having explained something of Lethaby's notion of such general concepts as Art and Architecture it is easier to discuss some of the ingredients of Lethaby's architectural thought in more of its particulars. In the next chapter Lethaby's ideas on architectural design (its meaning and aims) will be discussed.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Letter from Webb to Lethaby, January 1906.

⁹⁶ 1920, repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 6-7.

⁹⁷ The Builder, p.2.

⁹⁸ “The Wit and Wisdom...,” The Builder, January 29, 1932, p. 219.

⁹⁹ Some of Lethaby's works seem to address more directly than others general terms discussed in the chapter. These, listed here for the reader's convenience are (chronologically):

- (1) “Architectural Examination,” Architectural Association Notes (1890-91).
- (2) Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892).
- (3) “The Builder's Art and the Craftsmen,” in Architecture—A Profession or an Art (1896).
- (4) “The relation of Modern Architecture to Craftsmanship” (1906).
- (5) “The Architecture of Adventure,” R.I.B.A. Journal (1910).
- (6) Architecture (1911).
- (7) “Art and Workmanship,” Imprint (1913).
- (8) “The Foundation in Labor,” The Highway (1917).

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- (9) "Architecture and Civilization," R.I.B.A. Journal (1917).
 - (10) "What Shall We Call Beautiful?," Hibbert Journal (1918).
 - (11) "The Centre of Gravity" (1920).
 - (12) "Architecture as Form in Civilization," London Mercury (1920).
 - (13) "Modernism and Design," The Builder (1921).
 - (14) Form in Civilization (1922—reprinting of earlier essays some of which are included in the this list).
 - (15) "Industry and the Notion of Art" (1926).
 - (16) "Architecture Nature and Magic," The Builder (1928).
 - (17) "About Beauty" (pamphlet) (1928).
 - (18) "Architecture as Structural Geometry," The Builder (1929).
 - (19) "Architecture as Engineering," The Builder (1929).

CHAPTER IV

THE AIMS OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

This chapter will discuss Lethaby's thoughts on the nature of architectural design and what the limitations of this activity were, from Lethaby's standpoint, in terms of realizing the ideal architectural end-product. One focus in the discussion is Lethaby's arguments aimed at persuading people to give up the idea of the designer as an autonomous generative force in the production of art and his conviction of the need for closer ties between art-conception and art-production. Two other foci concern Lethaby's do's and don'ts of the design process: 1) rejection of universal proportion systems and 2) acceptance of an aggressively empirical approach – one of experiment. Some of the passages here on the importance of the “doers” (artists and craftsmen) versus the “thinkers” in the process of architectural production also relate to discussions in later chapters on ornament (its nature and production) and on workmanship. Lethaby's views on the irrelevancies of “style” (also discussed later) have some resonance here in Lethaby's cautions about considering “design” too esoterically. Passages in a later chapter emphasizing Lethaby's general faith in the benevolent potential of “science” are related to Lethaby's stress in this one on experimentation in his recommendations as to architectural design methodology.

The Nature of “Design” and the Proper Function of Designers

“Design” is a part of the process by which architecture is produced and so it was acknowledged by Lethaby. But it is apparent from his writings that he was concerned that the “designing” phase of architectural endeavor was being given or might be given too much due, when attempts to credit the source of an architectural success were made. Also, he was concerned that the nature of architectural design would be construed differently than he believed to be true and that designers should understand their role as being closely tied to and augmenting rather than (inadvertently) working at cross-purposes to the later stages of activity on an architectural project.

Drawing on the example of medieval architecture in (Architecture, 1911), Lethaby warned that “design” should not be tied to “taste” but more appropriately was to be based on knowledge derived from

past experience: "...a great church was not an essay in 'design' for the satisfaction of 'taste', it had been developed organically..."¹ In the same work, paraphrasing the sculptor Rodin, and presumably finding the Frenchman's thought valid for architecture as well, Lethaby scored the relative unimportance of "design"—it was "as nothing compared to workmanship..."² Though apparently an inferior genre to workmanship design must be closely tied to it, as he pointed out a decade later: "'design' is not some strange contortion of a useful thing into a freak, it is properly, the arranging how reasonable work may be rightly done."³ Also, in 1921, in his series in The Builder, "Modernism and Design," Lethaby pointed out that historically, right up until the early nineteenth century, architectural designs had had a more salubrious relationship to the actual building efforts than they did later:

Up to the time of Soane and even of Cockerell 'architecture', although in theory conceived superstitiously as 'style', was practically in a large degree still a marshaling of the building crafts. Paper designs were understood to be symbols of solid workmanship, but afterwards the paper became principal, and the function of builders was to make a full size model of an 'architectural design'. So it has come about that we build no vitally real churches and houses...⁴

At another point in the same series, the inadequacy of architectural "design" in recent times is also brought up, here tied to the designer's overly-restricted way of working: "The modern designer has been far too much subjected to a lead pencil and india-rubber view of things, and we conceive of all patterns and forms as defined by lead pencil outlines. Merely working in other ways at times would make a difference in our habit of looking at things."⁵ The series provided at still another point that "...a

¹ Architecture, W. R. Lethaby (1911, 1955 ed.), p. 56.

² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

³ "Craftwork and Art" (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴ "Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture," Sub-part IX, The Builder, September 2, 1921, p. 288. Also in Philip Webb (original written 1925) Lethaby wrote that the architect should not be a "style-supplier" and that architecture grew rather from invention and experimentation.

⁵ "Mere Designing" (Part V), 6 May, 1921, p. 591.

reasonable definition of ‘design’ would be... Deciding how materials shall be used and workmanship done.”⁶

Some of Lethaby’s appraisals of his contemporaries made in the 1920s show Lethaby’s inclination to cast references to “design” in pejorative terms. In his volume on his friend and fellow architect, Ernest Gimson, he wrote that Gimson understood that “art was doing not ‘designing’.”⁷ A comment about another architect and friend, John D. Sedding, in his biography of Webb submitted: “...he saw as few of his time had seen that architecture was workmanship rather than paper...”⁸ More uncertain praise was offered in the writings on Webb of a third architect, Godwin; he had, Lethaby wrote “...an amazing gift for ‘designing’...”⁹

The Notion of Special Powers for Designers

Lethaby took issue with, as might be expected from his egalitarian view of the world, the notion that a designer (or in fact the architect or artist in general) is entitled to a special, detached position in the process of making art and architecture and to a legitimacy of artistic action spawned by “genius” or a special “gift.” Lethaby would again reinforce the inter-connectedness of things in the process of making art and architecture and how the architect as designer really must be one with the other “doers” of architectural endeavors. In 1913 in The Builder Lethaby wrote:

Much harm is being done by allowing art to be too specialised and isolated from common life—harmful to those of us who feel that we are merely practical men, and harmful to the man who thinks that he is specially an artist, and hence is called on to live apart in somewhat intolerant arrogance. We are all artists so far as we are connected with the making and doing of things.”¹⁰

⁶ “The Workmanship Basis” (Part III, 4 March, 1921, p. 285).

⁷ Ernest Gimson (1924), p. 4.

⁸ Philip Webb (1935 edition of the 1925 series in The Builder), p. 78. Also Lethaby stated that Sedding knew the “spirit” in an architectural work to be more important than “forms”.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77-78.

¹⁰ “Some Things to be Done” The Builder, (14 Feb., 1913), p. 207.

Ten years later, Lethaby supplied another caution against genius: “The [present architects] must put aside the idea of genius architecture and ask for a more common-sense way of building.”¹¹ And similarly, later in 1921 he wrote: “The faculty for design has been allowed to fall into disuse and decay under the supposition that it is a special ‘gift’ only to be exercised by a sort of ‘inspiration’. Few people like to claim inspiration so design has tended to fall into the hands of a little band of ‘experts’.”¹²

Two years later, Lethaby wrote disdainfully of “designing architects, who today are repelled by the nature of their being, as now conceived, to superior views which cannot be understood by the common people.”¹³ Elitism should have no place. Inspiration to guide the behavior of architects if they are to survive as an occupation could be drawn from the engineers (or at least as engineers might ideally be): “Either architects will change their ideas of what they are about and aim at being modern organizers of efficient building, cutting away sham art and style nonsense, or they will be superseded by other types more like we might conceive building engineers to be if they too, were not what they are.”¹⁴ In the mid-1920s in his chapter “Theory of Architecture” in his biography of Webb, Lethaby makes some related points, namely that he rejected:

- 1) the necessity of genius in architects.
- 2) that architecture addresses an aesthetic faculty.
- 3) architectural ‘designs’.¹⁵

“Fitness”, another way of bringing the designer down to earth, was also underlined by Lethaby in 1921: “The designing architect has to fit forms to the facts as perfectly as a glove fits the hand. It is this

¹¹ Quoted from “Professor Lethaby on ‘Our Hopes for the Future’,” The Builder, March 21, 1921. (Talk given to London County Council School of Arts and Crafts, March 15, 1921).

¹² “Craftwork and Art” (1921), exhibition catalog Intro., op.cit., pp.4-5..

¹³ “Clerks and Artists” (part VII of “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions”, The Builder, 6 July, 1923, p. 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁵ Philip Webb (1935 ed.) repr. of the 1925 writing in The Builder, Chapter VII, p. 119. In a lecture on Morris of 1926 (possibly May 4) found in manuscript form at Barnstaple, Lethaby maintained also that a work of art was not to be obtained “as so many architects and designers think, by providing a genius design for routine labor. It must first of all be a work of work.” (p. 13).

fitting which gives the beauty, although you may call it rhythm, et cetera, afterwards.”¹⁶ Or more critically, in 1923 he wrote: “Again I have been ‘out for a walk’ and have found a field-gate which has just been put up; this is doubtless a work of art of the present year... A thing like this could not be designed by a designer, it is the resultant of long evolution for fitness and economy.”¹⁷

The Relationship of the Designer to the Craftsman and to the Artist

Designers should not only be remote from the later processes of artistic production, they should, Lethaby said, have the ability to do the craftsman’s or executant artist’s part. That is why he could define design in his essay “Colouring” as “merely a sufficient knowledge of any given craft and the making of new combinations to fit new occasions.”¹⁸ Anyone who attempted to guide artistic work (the architectural designer would play such a role) must be able to do that work himself. The notion that one must be able to do themselves those things in which one aspires to lead others has ubiquitous applications in human behavior but Lethaby, and arts and crafts theorists in general, proposed a most rigorous interpretation of this idea as applied to designers vis-à-vis craftsmen and artists. In his early book Leadwork (1893), Lethaby wrote that architects should actually be craftsmen themselves, not businessmen or professionals.¹⁹ The architect’s relationship to his end product should be more like that of painters and sculptors to theirs. “The only way in which the crafts can again be made harmonious by beauty is for men with a sense of architectural fitness and a feeling for design to take up the actual workmanship and

¹⁶ “Planning, Composition, and Block-Form”, Part X: “Modernism and Design”, The Builder, 7 Oct., 1921, p. 451.

¹⁷ “Clerks and Artists” Part VII: “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions” (1923), 6 July, p. 18.

¹⁸ Undated manuscript at Barnstaple, p. 35. (Pages are numbered 32-40.)

¹⁹ Op. cit., p. 5. In D.S. Martin’s thesis (1957, op. cit.) we are told of Lethaby’s involvement in similar concerns from even earlier. According to Martin, the aim of the St. George’s Art Society, founded in 1883, with Lethaby as a key participant, was to discuss the question of craftsmanship and to bring the architect and the craftsman closer together. (p. 48).

practice it themselves...’’²⁰ A few years later (1897) in an address to a congress on technical education, Lethaby urged more interaction between architects and craftsmen—to take place in the same school.²¹

In the next decade, in a paper read to the International Congress of Architects, London (1906), Lethaby also stressed that architects needed to be in closer touch with the executants of their work, and should want to learn what these executants thought was good work and what improvements in method they could suggest.²² He wondered, in 1923, how Sir Christopher Wren, whose architectural output had been so prodigious in an earlier time, communicated with those who executed his work and suggested that a greater sharing of design responsibilities was part of Wren’s success:

The mass of work that Wren hewed his way through might not, without the evidence, be believed. He is like an architect of myth. It would be interesting to know the kind of organization that made it possible. His relations to the executants who worked for him must have been different from our own. Strong, the master-mason at St. Paul’s under Wren, was a trusted co-operator, and for ‘decorative work’ the master depended, as we ought to do, on free artists—sculptors, wood-carvers, metal-workers, painters.²³

In his book on Gimson of 1924, Lethaby acknowledged one source of his view about the skills of the architect (or designer) as craftsman—William Morris. It was related that Morris had taught that nothing should be planned by the architect that the architect could not do himself.²⁴ John Brandon-Jones plausibly pointed out what he saw as the fallacy in the approach championed by Morris and Lethaby:

Because they were artists of genius, and had an instinct for proportion and rhythm, Morris and his disciples took it for granted that any designer, conscientious in the pursuit of fitness for purpose and sound construction, would automatically produce work of beauty. They based this idea on their own experience, and being by nature modest as well as able, it does

²⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

²¹ “Technical Education and the Building Trades”, Journal of the Society of Arts, (23 July, 1897, p. 854). (More will be brought up about joint education programs in Chapter XIII.)

²² “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship” (printed as “The Relation of Modern Architecture to Craftsmanship”, p. 2.

²³ “Science and Christopher Wren”, Part II: “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions” (1923), The Builder, 2 Feb., 1923, p. 204.

²⁴ Op. cit., p. 5.

not seem to have occurred to them that others, less gifted than themselves, might not arrive at satisfactory results by similar methods...Because they did not consciously make use of rules it was assumed that others would be able to achieve equal success by what were known as 'direct methods'. Unfortunately those with less talent or less experience make some dreadful mistakes, and even the work of the masters has its weaknesses.²⁵

In 1925 (in Philip Webb), Lethaby caustically underlined how important it was that the architect learn how the work is done—how he must be close to the builder and be, in fact, a craftsman himself. The professional architect, he wrote: "...sets far from his work, writing and answering letters more than half his time. What does he know of the suggestions offered by the handler of material? The profession of architecture is an absurdity, and the sooner the cobwebs that surround it are swept away the better."²⁶ The contractor, though, was in a better position by virtue of his background—a fact which argued, from Lethaby's point of view, for communal education of architects and craftsman: "Even the contractor, the purveyor of labour, is not so far removed from actual building work as we architects; he has generally passed through the workshop and made himself a handicraftsman. It would be well if everyone who aspired to be an architect did the same."²⁷

Lethaby tried to follow his own advice in practice. That is, he tried to maintain a close link between architect and craftsman. Some evidence of this is found in the craft products exhibited by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and credited to Lethaby. For example, from the 1889 Exhibition, a list of work credited to Lethaby includes a panel of an altar table by E.S. Prior, an inlaid box, some fire dogs, a design for silversmith work, an inlaid glass frame, and three tiles.²⁸ From the Society's Exhibition of 1896, Lethaby is credited with a candlestick, a table, a gas light fixture, an electric light fixture and two book

²⁵ "After William Morris", Artifex, Vol. 4, 1970, p. 56. A more contemporary opinion by Lethaby's admirer, Lawrence Weaver, wrote in 1919 (long before Lethaby himself stopped advocating it) that architectural fashion (this time meaning possibly Arts and Crafts Movement thinking) had laid too much stress on the craftsman and had looked to him for architecture salvation. Weaver said the tendency in 1919 (in his opinion) was toward less emphasis on this although he still advised not rejecting this view completely. (Small Country Houses of Today, Vol. II, p. 98.)

²⁶ Op. cit. (1935 ed.), pp. 82 & 122.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ From the Catalog of the Second Exhibition of the Art and Crafts Exhibition Society.

plates.²⁹ In those instances, it is not clear what Lethaby's actual role was in the production of each item—that is, if he actually made the item or designed it for someone else's execution (although the latter was certainly true in some cases), but it is probable that in all instances he kept in close touch with the entire process. More evidence of Lethaby's solid commitment, although an architect, to involvement in the crafts is his founding in 1890 (with others) of Kenton & Company, an enterprise concerned with making furniture. David Martin in his thesis on Lethaby in 1957 pointed out that, in fact, Lethaby designed painted pottery and tiles for Wedgewood, woodwork for Farmer and Brindley, leadwork for Wenham and Waters, metal work (mainly in cast iron) for Longden & Company, and furniture for a number of firms.³⁰ Martin also observed that Lethaby's first architectural mentor, Alexander Lauder, showed by example how an architect might be involved in the crafts. Lauder's stained glass windows, murals, terra cotta friezes, glazed tile fireplaces, and pottery are mentioned and, as Martin wrote :“all designed, and some even executed by Lauder himself.”³¹

Pessimism

At times, Lethaby expressed pessimism that the architect could ever come close enough to the craftsman or artist to provide appropriate designs for their work. In 1921 he said:

...I have no real belief in any moulding or decorations unless they are designed by the artists who work them—masons and joiners. However sympathetic an architect [of the] drawing office type may be, he cannot feel the stone under the tool and know what it will take. If we go on using mouldings we should hand them over to the executive artists and abate our

²⁹ *The Studio*, Vol. 9 (1896-97), pp. 189-204. Other Arts and Crafts architects involved themselves similarly with the crafts. For example, in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show of 1893, tiles by Halsey Ricardo and a tea cloth by Gimson were exhibited. (cf. *Studio Magazine*, Vol. II, no. 7 (1893), pp. 10 and 17). Basil Ward, looking back on Lethaby's career in 1957 mentioned a number of additional crafts in which Lethaby was active: glassware, leatherwork, needlework, wall-paper, and the graphic arts. (*Design*, 1957, p. 46).

³⁰ Martin's thesis (1957), p. 85. Lethaby's various design activities have been discussed in Chapter 1 and here it would be best to refer only to the fact that a number of his independent commissions, both acquired directly and working for other architects, including his prodigious output under Shaw, were in the realm of craft design. There is also his early furniture designs published in *The Building News*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

drawing clerk fussiness. Some day buildings will again have to be made more interesting to those who do it...³²

Earlier the same year, Lethaby had warned against architects attempting to design sculpture:

To be worth anything at all [monuments involving sculpture], however, it would have to be cut in a masterly way by a man who knew and felt, a sculptor in fact—trade carving is nonsense. Architects properly should not ‘design’ carving, they cannot know enough about it and this kind of work should go to a sculptor to begin with.³³

Lethaby had written in 1893 on the last page of Leadwork that he wished workers would in fact not cooperate in producing office-designed work and that someone: “...may again take up this fine old craft of lead-working as an artist and original worker, refusing to follow ‘designs’ compiled by another...”³⁴

Separation of Design and Manual Work

Lethaby, in some of his comments, dwelt on the inseparability of design and manual work and the resulting ill effects when they were separated. In early writing, such as his essay from 1892, one sees this:

Design progressed and changed through the suggestion gained from direct observation of special aptitudes and limitation of material, and the instant ability to seize on a fortunate accident, and to know when the work is properly finished. The separation of the two necessarily makes design doctrinaire...and workmanship servile;...³⁵

At another place in the same essay, Lethaby suggested that large scale might justify office-designed work:

On a large scale, and in work determinable by line and note, it is both possible and necessary that the thoughts of one man should be carried out by the labour of others. But on a smaller scale, and in a design which cannot be mathematically defined, one man’s thoughts can never

³² “The Mystery of Mouldings”—Part VIII. “Modernism and Design”, The Builder, 5 Aug., 1921, p. 166.

³³ “Positive Data”—Part II, “Modernism and Design”, 4 Feb., 1921, The Builder, p. 157. Basil Ward (in Design, 1957, p. 46) also quoted Lethaby, without giving a source or date as saying “...design is best performed by those familiar with the material and process...”

³⁴ Op. cit., p. 148.

³⁵ “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman”, Architecture – A Profession or an Art (R. N. Shaw and T. G. Jackson, eds.), p. 161.

be expressed by another. We are always, in these days, endeavoring to separate the two, we want one man to be always thinking and another always working.³⁶

Separation of designing from working is unhealthy Lethaby said more directly earlier in the essay: “The crafts of the mason, the carpenter, the plasterer are even now being finally destroyed by a system in which design is divided from work, the present system in which the designer has no hands to execute and the worker no head to think.”³⁷ Also in the essay he noted: “Work will solve all the problems of design. At present we are trying to paint our picture by means of measurements and written directions, to do our [present day] sculpture by detail drawings, and all by lowest tender [estimate], is it any wonder that we fail?”³⁸

After the turn of the twentieth century, in 1905, Lethaby also wrote about the separation problem between design and work:

With the critical attention given to the crafts by Ruskin and Morris, it came to be seen that it was impossible to detach design from craft...and that, in the widest sense, true design is an inseparable element of good quality, involving as it does the selection of good and suitable material, contrivance for special purpose, expert workmanship, proper finish, and so on...”³⁹

Again, where there was separation, Lethaby thought, there were insalubrious results: “Workmanship when separated by too wide a gulf from fresh thought—that is, from design—inevitably decays...”⁴⁰

In 1921, Lethaby showed a negative mood—admitting that the separation he was concerned about had already taken place, but seemed resigned to having to work with this condition:

³⁶ Ibid., p. 160.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 153. The problem of the worker being separated from work by “designs” is also brought up in 1893 (Leadwork, p. 4).

³⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

³⁹ Editor’s preface to Stained Glass Work by C.W. Whall, January, 1905, p. xii. In a typescript at Barnstaple, Medieval Architecture (no date) Lethaby remarked that the separation of design and production had not afflicted as it had architecture, some transportation devices: “There are no aesthetic theories, fortunately, about the design of ship and carts and the thought of ‘design’ has hardly been separated from the thought of making them.” (p. 3)

⁴⁰ Ibid.

During the last century or two, and especially during the last generation or two, a state of things has come about in which the workman has no say in regard to his workmanship; ...

...work interest, once the very well-spring of building beauty, has run dry. I do not see how, at this time, with our type of organization [in the building industry] it can be much different, but I do see that it is necessary to realise the facts and to design accordingly.⁴¹

Two years later, Lethaby identified the design/work problem as a key issue of “modernism”: “One of the pressing needs of a reasonable modernism in architecture is to understand the relation between organization and workmanship, between ordering clerkship and executing art.”⁴² Just before, in the same writing, Lethaby lamented the growth of the “office” side of the activity of building construction, to the detriment of the whole:

One general characteristic of the time we have been going through has been the emergence and domination of the clerkly kind of person, the official, the organiser, the recorder. Of course, he has been necessary up to a point—in this kind of world we have made. But it may well be doubted whether the development has not gone—or may not go—too far.⁴³

Lethaby continued, rejecting:

...the necessity that organising persons should magnify their office, entrench their position, and tend to increase, while those they organise are step by step subjected, eliminated, and destroyed...

Again, the chief clerk always requires more and more junior clerks, and the clerkly sphere tends to become a self justified mechanism...the members of the clerkly body among themselves, grow more and more regardless of the world outside and final objectives.⁴⁴

In Lethaby’s biography of Webb, he wrote of the problems of the contemporary architectural profession as including the necessity for the architect to “design work suitable for our modern heartless [!] way of execution...”⁴⁵

⁴¹ “The Workmanship Basis” – Vol. III, “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, 4 March, 1921, p. 245.

⁴² “Clerks and Artists” – Part VII, “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” The Builder, 6 July, 1923, p. 16.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Lessons from afar on the Separation of Design from Work

Lethaby referred to other civilizations, apparently to provide lessons to be learnt about the “separation” issue just discussed: “In Egypt it is recognized that after the dynasties of the early kingdom had passed, some dead hand seems to have been laid on the once free spirit of the people, who never after were allowed to express themselves naturally, except in the generation which saw the new sun-worship established.”⁴⁶ Or, in regard to India: “Of India I don’t know enough to dare to say more than that I suppose much of its ills may have been caused by the choice of higher thought and the common working life.”⁴⁷

Craftsman Autonomy

Craftsmen and artists must be allowed to work relatively uninhibited, Lethaby would sometimes argue. Contrasted to other attitudes just discussed, the essence, in this direction of his thought, was that attempts by designers and architects to get more directly involved in the actual “making” process or to know more about it, would really not overcome all that was wrong. In 1893, (Leadwork) he seems to suggest that the making process must be autonomous enough for the actual individual maker to shine through in the work: “Behind all design there must be a personality expressing himself; ...”⁴⁸ In 1906 he suggested that workers in each trade be responsible for design in that trade – that it was as absurd for architects to design ornamental metal-work as it would be for them to design oil paintings!⁴⁹ In “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910) he wrote that a “higher architecture” would result from spontaneous interaction (and one might assume a free interaction) of the arts, not from efforts to impose the architect’s

⁴⁵ Philip Webb (1935 ed., repub. of 1925 series in *The Builder*) p. 141-142.

⁴⁶ Scripts and Scraps (Alfred Powell, editor), 1956, p. 26.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship”(1906), *op. cit.*, p. 2 of 3-page printed excerpt.

own ideal.⁵⁰ In 1923, Lethaby wrote that modern architects must give all artists whom he organizes (and he includes bricklayers as well as sculptors and painters) a “fair” (fairly free?) rein in their work.⁵¹

Similarly, in an undated excerpt collected by Alfred Powell in Scripts and Scraps, Lethaby described a bifurcated path: “...we perceive that there are only two ways: the workers can either be artists following a tradition and exploiting possibilities or they can be organised as ‘hands’, with a man in the office to do the designs.”⁵² Even following the example of his mentor, William Morris, Lethaby thought, could not provide a substitute for the craftsman’s own primary involvement in a work. Even Morris, educated as an architect but dedicated to bridging the gap between “designed” and “made” object through increased knowledge of and involvement in production, came up short in Lethaby’s view. Lethaby used the example of stained glass:

Stained glass (at Morris’ establishment) was only so far a success in that there was a rapid and skilled designer who would supply designs, and W.M. could keep the colour right, but it never could be right good craftsman’s glass, because there were no draughtsmen who could translate the beautiful pictures [of Edward Burne-Jones] into effective paintings for glass. Also, it was impossible for William Morris to make the glass and burn it in his own kilns. In a way the glass was surprisingly good, but more by comparison with such work by others than because it was good craftsman’s glass—which it never was nor could be under the conditions possible.⁵³

How Design Should Proceed – “proportions”

Lethaby offered a number of counselings to the designer (if there must be one). Some of the more persistent themes include his questioning of “proportions,” his emphasis on “experiment” and the low esteem he had for “designed” objects. The first theme is brought up noticeably in Architecture (1911). In discussing Gothic architecture there he wrote of the slow perfection of parts—of “originality” that was

⁵⁰ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 67.

⁵¹ “Clerks and Artists” (op. cit.), p. 17.

⁵² Op. cit., p. 16.

⁵³ Philip Webb, p. 61. Also in this work, Lethaby attempting to list (and recommend) some of the aims of Webb’s work, included pleasure to the worker—calling attention, in another essay to the significance of the worker’s input. (p. 14)

really insight for the “essential” and the “inevitable”. Proportion was the result of effort and training—it was the “discovered law of structure.”⁵⁴ He continued: “...it may be doubted if there be any other basis for proportion than [the] vitalizing of necessity. Nothing great or true in building seems to have been invented in the sense of willfully designed.”⁵⁵ This rejection of proportions, arrived at consciously, is part of Lethaby’s broader distrust of theory, as shown in the following passage: “All vital schools, however, knew this instinctively, as knowing no other. They did not theorize, but built.”⁵⁶ For the future, Lethaby wrote in 1911, one should, among other things, get rid of any “aesthetic superstition” that beauty involved the use of proportions. Part of this was that a particular (articulated) system of proportion satisfied the mind and not the eye—and, apparently for Lethaby this was not an acceptable aesthetic basis. This “mind/eye” issue relating to proportions, Lethaby suggested, was a problem from ancient Greece onwards although he did not focus on the issue of Greek formulation of proportional rules, which were intended to solve visual problems but also were, perhaps for the reason that they had solved these problems, be satisfying to the mind as well.⁵⁷ Also: “A modern architect might design a tombstone with certain ratios if he cared, but he could hardly try to apply a preconceived and arbitrary system to larger problems.”⁵⁸

In 1908, in discussing Greek architecture, Lethaby seems a little more appreciative of Greek architecture but used the occasion to attack the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius’ view on proportion which might, it seems, be easily extended back to the Greeks:

The method of ratio measurement as used by Vitruvius is merely absurd, and can only be a parody of Greek thought on the subject. If Nature, says he, has made the body so that the members are measures of the whole...so the ancients have determined that in their works each portion should be an aliquot [designating a part of a number by dividing the number without a remainder] part of the whole. This seems quite simple, but the body is not so proportioned, and the theory never answers the master question as to how many parts of the

⁵⁴ Op. cit., p. 158.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 179.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p 185-186.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

lesser should go into the greater. How, for instance, are we to know if a column should be eight, nine, or ten times its diameter, and if either eight or nine, why not anything in between; indeed Vitruvius himself preferred eight and a half. It reminds one of the system of the London contractor who formed his estimate by multiplying a quarter by four—the quarter to be guessed. Again, Vitruvius gives it as a great fact of natural proportion that if a man lies down with his arms fully extended he may be included in a square or a circle. He doesn't mention that, as the arms do not radiate from the middle of the body but from near the head, if all can be included in a circle the square which is also to enclose him will be very oblong. He is assured that 'beauty is produced by the dimension of all the parts being duly proportioned to one another.' So are we, but the question remains, which, and how, and where?⁵⁹

Lethaby continued in the 1908 writing: "The Greek idea of proportion cannot be brought back; and, indeed, to some extent it may have been mistaken...", although he said it was appropriate to its time:

...a time when the laws of geometry and music were being collected and investigated for the first time, when the paths of the stars were being mapped out, and the language and politics were all being systematised, it was natural to search for the lines and measurements of the perfect building, musical in beauty, an expression of eternal law.⁶⁰

Modern man contrasted to ancient man should view proportion differently, Lethaby wrote: "Proportion to the modern mind can, I think, mean in the main only organic fitness plus habit. To the ancients from their manner of thought it meant more; it was undoubtedly believed that the perfect work was conditioned by a scheme of related measurements."⁶¹ In another opinion on the subject, Lethaby wrote that the difference between the workability (and suitability) of the ancient Greek system then and in Lethaby's time hinged on the increased complication in buildings in the later period and the differing requirements of the latter:

The Greeks as their temple architecture slowly developed, came to think that a special virtue attached itself to dimensional simplicity, that, if every part were related to every other part by a simple scheme of fractions, a unity would result, and that the temple in reaching this unity would become a perfect thing. But all such ideas necessarily break down where building becomes more complex and is conditioned by other needs than that of attaining a sort of

⁵⁹ "The Theory of Greek Architecture", R.I.B.A.J., 8 Feb., 1908, p. 216.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 215. Another instance of accepting "proportion" if it could be equated to fitness follows: "Proportion, then, means either the result of building according to dimensions having definite relations one to another, or it means functional fitness." (Published in The Builder, "Wit and Wisdom..." writings by Lethaby selected by William Davidson, 8 Jan., 1932, p. 52. — no date on Lethaby's quote.)

sacred perfection. Proportion of this sort was in truth rather a satisfaction to the mind than the eye.⁶²

And again from his 1908 writing: "...the modern man seeks right and fitness by direct experiments. From a long series of experiments he may at last deduce some general laws. He does not first assume some simple mathematical relation of parts for his chemical compounds and experiment only along those lines."⁶³ The narrowness of view Lethaby called attention to in this last excerpt was not part of the development of the present-day bicycle or locomotive, Lethaby reasoned. Instead: "a general relation of parts (its due proportions) has been reached. This ratio is the accident of the bicycle, but to the classical mind the bicycle would be the accident of some supposed perfect ratio."⁶⁴ Lethaby said he saw no grounds for the classical assumption about perfect ratios:

While the benefits which come of following this line of development are manifest [convenience and standardization?], it was only one of an infinite number of possible starting points. It is the starting, not the point, which matters. I can see no ground for any of the assumptions. I do not see that a tree is likely to be more of a tree or even more agreeable to the eye for being twice as high as it is broad, or that we do anything more wonderful for a bicycle by expressing its ratios in the modules of the backbone than if we gave the size in inches.⁶⁵

Lethaby's later views on proportion are consistent with the aforementioned. In the early 1920s (1921) Lethaby, mentioning Clive Bell, and comparing proportioning practices in the arts unfavorably with those in other areas, including design, wrote:

A sentence must be said, too, on proportion. Take any object which (in Mr. Clive Bell's phrase) has 'significant form'—a fiddle, a ship, a carriage, a crane, a bridge, an engine; these when they have been developed according to their own proper nature and laws have "proportions"... The other day I saw a new car—a low, long rakish, wicked-looking craft, of bright metal; its geometry of curved surfaces was not complex and refined and it seemed to me, exquisitely 'proportioned'. Yet its form had never been corrected by triangulation, and I

⁶² "The Wit and Wisdom of ...", The Builder, Davidson, editor, 8 Jan., 1932, p. 52.

⁶³ "The Theory of Greek Architecture" (1908), op.cit., p. 215.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

see that I should not care the least for ‘proportions’ that had been obtained by system. It is a curious sign of the times that we allow the ‘scientific’ people to feel their way to the lines of a car by instinct while we [in the arts] want to patent a method of producing art by rules. Triangularity must be strangulation. True proportion is ever the result of fitting the function.⁶⁶

This foregoing excerpt links design to functionalism, an issue that will be discussed further in the next chapter. Near the end of his career, in 1929, one can find Lethaby also maintaining that the Golden Mean and other systems of proportion were not right for architecture.⁶⁷ Lethaby also disagreed with a more recent architectural theorist, Viollet-le-Duc and said, in a generally appreciative study of him, that the Frenchman was wrong in saying that a new art must rest on a formula.⁶⁸

Experiment

Experiment, Lethaby emphasized, is a key element in the making of architecture. In “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), he observed that experiment was the “living force” and “active principle” of all architecture.⁶⁹ While architecture should be “customary” (responding to traditional needs) it should also be “experimental” (because of changing needs).⁷⁰ Growth is achieved in architecture by continuous experiment – which is not to be mistaken for a quest of originality, however.⁷¹ The next year, in Architecture (1911) he wrote that experiment was at the center of architecture and must be brought back into the mainstream of architectural activity.⁷² A decade later, experiment was again emphasized: “In building ships or air planes or motor cars we still build organisms, and these, like the cathedral, are

⁶⁶ “Planning, Composition, and Block Form,” Part X: “Modernism and Design”, 7 Oct., 1921, p. 451-452. A similar view (undated) was published in The Builder (1932), “Wit and Wisdom of ...”, Davidson (ed.): “...true proportion (as opposed to ‘abstract and absolute’) is always changing in answer to changing conditions. Proportion, properly, is the resultant of fitness.” (p. 52)

⁶⁷ “Architecture as Engineering” (1929), The Builder, 8 Feb., p. 301.

⁶⁸ “Viollet-le-Duc as Teacher,” MS, (n.d.), Barnstable, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 66.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁷² Op. cit. (1955 edition), p. 194.

experiments in poise, force, persistence, unfolding by their own inner principles of being; their form discovered, not imposed by taste.”⁷³ He exhorted architects the same year: “...make yourself acquainted with the methods of workmanship, consider the materials that can be obtained in the markets, be scientific and experimental.”⁷⁴

Cautions Against “Designed” Objects

Lethaby repeatedly used the word “design” in pejorative contexts, when applied to architecture. In 1911 in discussing the Gothic cathedral, he said it was “discovered” or “revealed” not “designed”.⁷⁵ More generally he wrote: “...a noble structure is not a thing of will, of design, of scholarship.”⁷⁶ Reporting on Lethaby’s 1913 talk on “The Architectural Treatment of Reinforced Concrete”, a writer in The Builder wrote: “[Lethaby]...warned them not to worry overmuch about design. Above all, do not try to be eccentric, striking, or original.”⁷⁷ Buildings, Lethaby wrote in 1921, design themselves out of the requisite data.⁷⁸ A few years later in his writings on Webb, Lethaby went so far as to say that architecture is opposite to “designing”.⁷⁹ Other related comments of indeterminate date include his statement that “little in ancient architecture was ‘design’” and “nothing great or true in building seems to have been invented in the sense of willfully designed.”⁸⁰ Lethaby’s mentor, Webb, however, commenting on the designs for London’s new County Hall, used “design” in a more favorable context:

⁷³ “The Uses of Antiquity” – Part VII, “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, 1 July, 1921, p. 6.

⁷⁴ Part I, “Modernism and Design” (1921), The Builder, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Architecture (1955 edition), p. 158.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ The Builder, article title same as Lethaby’s talk, 7 Feb., 1913, p. 176.

⁷⁸ Part II, “Modernism of Design”, The Builder, 4 Feb., 1921, p. 156-157.

⁷⁹ Philip Webb (1925 series in The Builder, as in 1935 book version, p. 119. In the same work (p. 69) he commented that Butterfield “...remained a builder-architect; he was no exhibitor of ‘designs’...”

⁸⁰ “The Wit and Wisdom of ...”, (Davidson, editor), The Builder, 8 June, 1932, pp. 52 and 53 respectively.

Now comes this County Hall matter. I really thank you for sending me the two newspaper pictures. On the whole I'm inclined to think that some reason is shown in accepting Mr. Knott's design but now is the time to set about the work of really designing it, and taking the 'competition' parts out of it—holding like grim death on to those which have the salt of 'design' in them.”⁸¹

Other General Counselings on Design

Here and there in Lethaby's writing appear other pieces of advice related to design activity. In 1892, in summing up four tenets to follow in making furniture (although Lethaby must surely have felt comfortable applying these to architecture too), he advised that one should:

1. Be sure to understand the purpose of the thing being made.
2. Do not be afraid to make it the traditional way – a way which has “stood the test of time.”
3. Select sound materials and the one most appropriate to the work.
4. Make it beautiful – something that can be achieved by studying older things [again the test of time argument].⁸²

Common agreement is emphasized as a desirable basis for design also. In 1908 Lethaby wrote: “The Gothic law of adventurous energy and the classic law of development from within are both needed. It is not [the ?] finding or inventing of features that will do anything for us; no individual search for proportion, beauty or design can help without a wide basis of agreement.”⁸³ Similarly, about the same time (1910), he wrote that architecture will only be produced if there is common and sustained agreement as to criteria – the only basis for agreement in the present day, he continued, being the scientific method.”⁸⁴

Consciousness and propriety were also to be considerations for Lethaby. In Architecture (1911) he wrote of building a “fully conscious architecture, free and fine”.⁸⁵ In the same work, this favorable reference to “consciousness” contrasts with (three pages earlier): “The temper of the national soul is

⁸¹ Webb to Lethaby (sometime between 1901-1919) from the collection of John Brandon-Jones.

⁸² “Simple Furniture” (originally printed in 1892, included in a volume called Plain Handicrafts).

⁸³ “The Theory of Greek Architecture” (op. cit.), p. 217-218.

⁸⁴ “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), republished in Form in Civilization (1922), p. 68.

⁸⁵ Architecture, p. 189.

likely to operate best in silence.” He wrote unfavorably on contemporary self-consciousness: “The Renaissance was self-conscious but moderns are conscious that they are self-conscious.”⁸⁶ Propriety apparently was judged to be especially important in the construction of urban buildings. In 1916 Lethaby stated that propriety must be considered in “city buildings.” Architects do not have the right to put up an insulting building.⁸⁷ Architects must consider not only their duties to individual employers but to the city as a whole.⁸⁸

In the 1920s, more advice surfaces. On the importance of arrangement and order: “Design, I have suggested may best be thought of as arranging how work should be done;...”⁸⁹ or ... “In Architecture we should substitute order for the orders.”⁹⁰ In Lethaby’s work on Webb, the importance of the “group” versus individual endeavor is underlined.⁹¹ Excess bareness or baldness was undesirable. That would be “affected,” Lethaby relayed, drawing on Webb as a source. But on the other hand, he supported Shaw’s favorite maxim: “keep it quiet.”⁹² Also, one finds in the writings about Webb that art is “hard work.”⁹³ A listing of Webb’s principles of design includes the “orderly arrangement” mentioned above, and the use of local materials and traditions.⁹⁴ Cognizance of modern building procedure and knowledge about materials and, peculiarly, a “theory” of art are the key ingredients in Lethaby’s own preferred mode of

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 186 and 189 respectively.

⁸⁷ “Architecture in Modern Life” (1916), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 109.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

⁸⁹ “Mere designing” – Part V, “Modernism and Design”, The Builder, May 6, 1921, p. 591.

⁹⁰ “The Wit and Wisdom”, The Builder (15 Jan, 1932), p. 132. (Davidson, editor) (date of original writing not given).

⁹¹ Philip Webb (1935), op.cit., p. 234. Originally published in The Builder as a series in 1925. See also Gropius’ similar views on this point.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 135-136 and p. 76 respectively.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 126.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 101.

architectural design, as set forth in his writings on Webb.⁹⁵ In a later work (1930), Lethaby listed his own “Seven Lamps” (following Ruskin) of “Design”:

- 1) The most important consideration is the work as a whole, the thing, the structure, that it shall be serviceable, suitable and excellent. In some arguments such data are sometimes pushed aside as ‘merely utilitarian’...
- 2) A second great base of design besides structure is found in the selection of appropriate materials...
- 3) A third source of design is found in the themes of workmanship. A design should not be an abstract thing, a whim which is imposed from above, but it should spring up and expand in and through workmanship. We should aim at sound focus of work rather than at showy shapes...
- 4) A fourth way of preparing for design is to look at Nature with the thought of gathering suggestions. Nature is infinite in extent and variety...
- 5) A fifth and certainly the main method in actual designing is in carrying on custom with a difference. Get into the habit of thinking variation and improvements of things you have seen. All the best design in the world has been done by adaptation and improvement...
- 6) A sixth element is experiment and exploration...
- 7) A seventh lamp of design is economy. Economy is part of perfection.⁹⁶

Thus, structure, materials, workmanship, inspiration from nature, attention to custom, experiment and economy are all assembled—echoing sources as ancient as Vitruvius (“economy”, if one can equate that, at least loosely, “with commodity”, and those as recent as Morris (workmanship).

The foregoing pages first set out a representative number of Lethaby’s opinions on the role of design and the designer in the process of accomplishing architectural work—these opinions attempting to dispel some notion or other such as that designers have special powers. The ideal relationship of the designer to the craftsman and the artist (in Lethaby’s view) was discussed next—first the passages counseling the designer to try to more closely understand the work of the craftsman and artist—to perhaps be one himself—and, second, a more pessimistic theme revolving around the idea that the designer cannot

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 85, regarding this last criteria.

⁹⁶ “Design and Structure”—Part II of “Art and the Community”, The Builder, 7 Feb., 1930, p. 309.

really accomplish this. The problem of the separation of designers from the works they are planning is discussed after that and then Lethaby's convictions about the desirability of craftsmen and artist being allowed to work relatively autonomously. Last, are discussed some aspects of design method according to Lethaby—goals and enabling devices are brought up, for example, Lethaby's views on proportional systems and on the value of experimentation, in particular.

One large issue affecting Lethaby's design method has been deferred until the next chapter—the issue of functionalism. It is certainly an important theme in Lethaby's writing, and in view of his general reputation in his later years as a progenitor of the functionalist approach in twentieth century architecture, seems well worth examining.

CHAPTER V

FUNCTION AND FUNCTIONALISM

A major ingredient in Lethaby's approach to design (in addition to those just discussed in the preceding chapter) is his emphasis on function. Functionalism, when applied to architecture, is a word that can have more than one definition and, like a number of other terms it can be defined broadly or narrowly.

Lethaby's thinking seems to be firmly connected to the early twentieth century's functionalism issue and he has been identified in the later stages of his career by various writers as a proto-functionalism or a pioneer, or early (twentieth century) functionalist in architecture. Indeed Lethaby's involvement in this role is advertised as one of his major contributions to architecture. Nikolaus Pevsner, in writing of the Modern Movement in Pioneers of Modern Design, a movement which he defined through criteria which are thoroughly functionalist, cited Lethaby's contributions. Posener, in Anfänge des Funktionalismus (The Beginnings of Functionalism, 1964) reserved one chapter just for Lethaby.¹ In the following pages Lethaby's functionalist leanings, both wider in sense and more narrow, will be discussed—including those which could place him within or related to other twentieth century functionalists. Also, any anti-functionalism and ambivalent positions will be noted. A discussion organized around a chronological order of Lethaby's writings will be used.

In one of the earliest of Lethaby's writings that can be linked to the subject at hand (Leadwork, 1893), the concepts of "service" and "purpose" are emphasized. In discussing artistic work of the middle ages, Lethaby wrote: "Each thing...expresses reasonable workmanship and happy thought in pleasant solution of some necessity of actual service."² "Service" and "purpose" are found in another passage from this work, with "ornament" apparently not contributing to any utilitarian concept of "service":

¹ In Posener's work, the "beginnings" end in the second decade of the twentieth century, with the founding of the Deutscher Werkbund.

² Op. cit., p. 3.

New design must ever be founded on a strict consideration of the exact purpose to be fulfilled by the proposed object, of how it will serve its purpose best,....

Ornament is quite another matter, it has no justification in service, it can only justify itself by being beautiful.³

Still earlier, in 1890, “need” is highlighted, even though it isn’t all that is required: “We cannot imagine a shirt sewn, a doorstep whitened, or a table laid, without some care and contrivance for enjoyment, over and above the mere needs and necessities of the moment;...”⁴

1900-1919

In 1910, Lethaby still emphasized, as in 1890 and 1893, “necessity”; one should, he wrote, seek solutions to known needs.⁵ Also in this he quoted Leonardo: “O marvelous Necessity, thou with supreme wisdom constrainest all effects to be the direct result of their causes, and by irrevocable law every natural action obeys thee by the shortest possible process. O wonderful stupendous Necessity, the theme and artifice of Nature, the Eternal law.”⁶ The following year, in Architecture, Lethaby maintained that great art is the “discovery of necessity”—citing Leonardo again, and also Christopher Wren as allies to his point of view.⁷ “Need,” in fact, he wrote, is the first prerequisite of all architecture—one cannot design outside it.⁸

Another aspect of functionalism is evident in his writing of 1911—efficiency. For something to function properly there not be excessive energy and/or material: “We need neither Greek nor Gothic, but an efficient method, and all our pre-occupation about ‘style’ blocks the way not only to high utility but to

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Cast Iron...”, Journal of the Society of Arts, February 14, 1890, p. 273.

⁵ “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910, repr. in Form in..., 1922, p. 91.

⁶ Ibid., p. 77 (source in Leonardo’s writings not given).

⁷ Architecture (1911), 1955 edition, p. 179.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 9 and 78. See also in this book: “The first great need of architecture is need itself”, p. 9.

high expression.”⁹ Later in the book, this comparison is employed: “...damp, cracked, and leaking ‘architecture’ must give way to houses as efficient as a bicycle.”¹⁰ Also a Gothic cathedral is compared to a ship. Both are treated favorably, and partially because in each case economy of material entails (one must assume) some sort of efficiency.¹¹ Elsewhere in the book he expressed hope that the scientific method would achieve efficiency in architecture.¹² Efficient methods were needed, Lethaby believed. Gothic architecture was pointed out as efficient—“all waste tissue was thrown off.”¹³

An emphasis on “purpose” is also brought up; architecture grows out of particular purpose.¹⁴ In ancient Greek building, Lethaby wrote, “purpose” (in company with several other characteristics) was a principle determinant: “The real proportions of a structure were, of course, determined by tradition, purpose, cost situation and materials...”¹⁵ Furthermore, as he said later in the volume, the sites of ancient Greek buildings (and later Gothic ones) were “not selected because the building would look well there.”—meaning, one supposes, that Lethaby was arguing (sometimes erroneously) that these sites were selected solely for utilitarian reasons.¹⁶ “Need” is another term closely allied to “purpose.” It would do no good to go beyond it in architectural designs: “Our attempt to ‘design’ in architecture outside need and beyond custom is like inventing a strange alphabet which does not correspond to words and meanings. It is quite easy and quite futile.”¹⁷ “Service”, the ability of the architectural work to perform usefully, was again

⁹ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 158. This comparison of buildings to ships apparently pre-dates those of Le Corbusier’s associated with the publication of his Vers Une Architecture. (1923).

¹² Ibid., p. 23.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 98 and 154 respectively for these last two sentences.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 78.

brought up in a written piece from 1913, “Art and Workmanship.” The Fine Arts, he wrote then, would be laid open to decay if separated from “service.”¹⁸

The body of functionalist theory developed in the early twentieth century included placing a heavy reliance on “science” to achieve its goals. “Science,” called to serve efficiency, was mentioned in Lethaby’s book of 1911, Architecture. Science is brought up again in 1913, in a talk by Lethaby on reinforced concrete. As paraphrased by a writer in The Builder that year: “Modern architecture had many weaknesses, but perhaps the chief one was in not having sufficient grasp of scientific construction.”¹⁹ Lethaby criticized contemporary building as being lacking from a utilitarian standpoint. As paraphrased in The Builder Lethaby had said:

When designing houses they [architects and builders] thought of pretty things and had their notions about Gothic style and that sort of thing; but when the house was built there were often leaky cracks in the roofs and damp areas in the walls, and so on. The picturesque-looking roof tiles cracked and fell out at the first winter frost, but still they went on doing it. All these vague notions of designing pretty pictures which ended in leaky roofs and damp walls were pretentious rubbish.²⁰

Boats were compared favorably by Lethaby to contemporary buildings. Again, as paraphrased in The Builder:

The only thing they did well in this age was playing, and the most exquisite work of man he supposed would be a racing yacht. There was not shoddy there—it was small and taut, exquisite and perfect in every joint, and very different from the damp and draughty houses which they made to live in. He put it that the great architectural problem was how to make their buildings shipshape.²¹

The emphasis on “efficiency” appears also in two works, in 1915 and 1916 respectively. In 1915 Lethaby cited an Austrian writer who had praised English architecture for its role as the cradle to the Arts and

¹⁸ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 216.

¹⁹ “The Architectural Treatment of Reinforced Concrete” published in The Builder, February 7, 1913. This came originally from Lethaby’s recent talk on the same subject to the Northern Polytechnic (London). p. 175. (The author of the summary in The Builder was not indicated.)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Crafts but also scored England's inefficient architecture.²² The next year in a description of beauty, efficiency is given a significant place: "...Beauty involves fitness, order, efficiency and rightness in all our work."²³ Also from 1916, in another comment complimentary of nautical activity he cited the efficiency of the British navy.²⁴

In 1917, "economy" (a close relative of efficiency) and "fitness", among other criteria linked to function, was brought up:

I should like to see the Royal Institute of British Architects attempt the functions of a true Academy in trying to bring about some expressed agreement on points which are obviously in the public interest. Such points are fitness for function, soundness of structure, economy, the need for good lighting, and suitable access for repairs and cleaning.²⁵

And further, on "economy" in this 1917 piece:

On the point of economy I may, however, add some few words. Economy, it seems to me is not merely a negative thing, the saving of cost by any means, the lowering of standard(s)? into poverty and squalor, producing an architecture of temporary shanties like that of our underground railway stations. It is rather a positive virtue in all the arts of civilization and life. The ideal of economy is to obtain full value [efficiency?] for the outlay of power, counted either as labour or money;...²⁶

"Economy," "efficiency" and "use" are qualities brought up in a further passage from this 1917 writing—one praising ancient Roman architecture and offering advice for the success of architecture in his own time:

The great Roman monuments were economical in that they were worthy, substantial, and lasting. As soon as our modern buildings are completed, or before, the annual charge for repairs begins; but most of the Roman buildings look as if they had never become invalidated

²² "Political Economy or Productive Economy" (1915, repr. in Form in..., p. 198.)

²³ "The Place of Art in Education" (1916), The Teachers' World, Wednesday, 23 Sept., p. 1.

²⁴ "Town Tidying" (1916, repr. in Form in..., 1922, p. 21).

²⁵ "The Spirit of Rome and Our Modern Problem in Architecture" (1917), Architectural Review, January, Vol. XLI, p. 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

so as to require this costly outlay of continuous nursing. We have to devise better roofs than the ordinary jumble of gutters and hips and valleys and ridge tiles and their slating, we have to solve the chimney question and the chimney-pot question and the parapet question; also the cement-pointing question and the floor-board question and the plaster-ceiling question. These make up the body of architecture more than all our superstitions about Classic and Romantic and Renaissance, and about Orders and proportion, and styles and manners. If we would have a true architecture we must substitute understanding modern ideas like economy, soundness, efficiency, for all this twaddle about the appearance...²⁷

The next year, in his series in The Builder, “A National Architecture” (1918), Lethaby emphasized again efficiency and utility:

Convenient arrangement, simplicity of roofing, ample lighting, well-distributed pipes should all be seen as in the very constitution of a house—its organic system.

The house designer has to bring these factors and dozens of others into working relations, and to eliminate vulnerable points; the various factors have to be taken in their right order of importance and the economical has to be made efficient.²⁸

In Lawrence Weaver’s Small Country Houses of Today (second volume, 1918), fellow English Arts and Crafts architect M. H Baillie-Scott discussed the difference between the “classic house” and the “craftsman house.” Similar to what Lethaby might easily have said on the same subject, Baillie-Scott claimed the classic house to be one “built from without,” whereas the craftsman house was “the natural outcome of internal requirements;” it was “elastic” and “accommodating” [to need].²⁹ In another writing from 1918, “What Shall We Call Beautiful,” Lethaby addressed more directly than in previous works the relationship of functionalist qualities, (“utility,” “service” and “need,” for example) to aesthetics. For example, exploring some points of disagreement with A.J. Balfour, the philosopher and Conservative politician, Lethaby included his own conviction that it was not possible to study art “isolated from utility.”³⁰ A few pages later in this work, Lethaby denied that analogies involving the field of music could

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “The Art of Construction” (1918), Part II of “A National Architecture”, The Builder, 11 Oct., p. 229.

²⁹ Op. cit., Chapter XV, p. 92-93.

³⁰ “What Shall We Call Beautiful” (1918), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 153.

be useful in identifying beauty in architecture because music, to Lethaby's mind, was not motivated by "utility."³¹ Lethaby also felt that the writers Benedetto Croce and Arthur Clutton-Brock (author of The Ultimate Belief, 1916) were wrong to disregard earlier thinkers like Plato, Ruskin and Tolstoi on the point they made that aesthetic value could not be separated from utility.³² The aim of beauty, Lethaby maintained was rooted in service (as well as production and creation) – not in aesthetic enjoyment or contemplation.³³ Aesthetic activity, Lethaby said, must be directional; art must also be judged by its service (use) to the community.³⁴ He cited Aristotle on the point that architecture was not a "fine art" – it was too conditioned by need – and in that Lethaby apparently thought of need in the more utilitarian sense.³⁵ Even memorials, Lethaby wrote the following year, should be useful, like Waterloo Bridge.³⁶ Also in 1919, in another piece in The Builder, Lethaby conveyed his appreciation for buildings to be judged by whether or not they fulfill their purpose and serve a need:

On the whole, I will confess, I think I have found out that such things dull and tire me ['make-believe buildings,' like, in Lethaby's view, Inigo Jones' Whitehall Palace and G.E. Street's Law Courts]. When, however, I happen to see a structure vividly shaped to fulfill a purpose and confer a service, I know I am stirred in a quite different way. I forget the tired picture-gallery feeling and the crabbed, critical temper, and in a moment wake to attention, understanding and sympathy...³⁷

1920-1924

The 1920's show continued consistency in Lethaby's thought in his functionalist-related views. In "Architecture as Form in Civilization" (1920) he again wrote that buildings must be "shaped by

³¹ Ibid., p. 157.

³² Ibid., p. 159.

³³ Ibid. A few pages later in listing more than a dozen ingredients which should compose a "modern" feeling for beauty, he included "service value" and also "fitness for purpose" and "economy of means"; p. 163.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 156.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 155.

³⁶ "Memorials of the Fallen: Service or Sacrifice" (1919), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 58).

³⁷ "The Beauty of Structures" (1919), Part VIII of "Observation and Suggestions," The Builder, 5 Sept., p. 239.

necessity” – not whim; and that “High Utility” was very important in architecture.³⁸ The attention of the architect should be focused on construction and efficiency, not style. The marine comparison appears again – the house of the future will be designed like a ship; everything will function.³⁹

In another writing from 1920, Lethaby again urged improvement in current work, continuing his emphasis on utilitarian concerns:

Our need now [in English houses], however, is to consolidate and perfect...Plaster ceilings are too much given to cracking and even to falling; and the doors...are draughty; there are too many dirt traps; fireplaces waste heat. Further, there is unnecessary expenditure in ‘features’ which nobody cares for – ‘handsome’ cornices and bold skirtings. A wood picture-rail a foot or two below the ceiling would usually be far better than the futile cornice,...Doors are often unnecessarily large and windows undesireably small;...we must aim at getting the small house as perfect as the bicycle.

The bicycle metaphor thus appeared again, as did the one about ships; Lethaby said he would like to see “house-like” associated with “ship-shape” and told of his admiration for airplanes as well. He identified soundness, convenience, light and heat as the essentials of housing. Lethaby spoke, in reference to lighting considerations, of practical matters, not aesthetic – about wall projections and bay windows to let in the sun.⁴⁰ “Picturesque” roofs were too complicated and more likely to leak: “A too picturesque roof will certainly become a leak in your income.” “Economy” is brought up also – with one of the ways of achieving it legitimately being “compactness.” The square, he pointed out, is the most economical plan for a four-walled building.⁴¹ Deadwood must be cut away from the design: “the half is greater than the

³⁸ Repr. in the book Form in... (1922), pp. 8-9.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 10; see also, Lethaby’s comment about the functional beauty of ships in the concluding section of Architecture, Nature and Magic, originally appearing serially in The Builder (1928) and published as a volume in 1956.

⁴⁰ Block quote and material following it from “Housing and Furnishings” (1920), originally published in The Athenaeum, 12 May, 1920. Reprinted in Form in Civilization (1922) from pp. 36-40 in the 1922 reprint. Basil Ward, from an unidentified source but with a 1920 date, quoted Lethaby in 1957: “The house of the future will be designed as a ship is designed as an organism which has to function in all its parts.” (from Design, p. 44).

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 38 and 39 (last three sentences). In a later letter to his friend Harry Peach (April 6, 1924), Lethaby wrote [as previously cited?] about walking through Kensington Gardens, observing fireplaces and doors that did not work and the decomposing ceilings.

whole”.⁴² Cornices and “bold skirting” can be dispensed with in favor of picture rails and plainer and smaller mouldings. Economy could also mean avoiding “overcrowding with trivialities” in interior decoration.⁴³

In Lethaby’s “Modernism and Design” series in The Builder (1921), the idea of “bareness,” at least under architectural conditions (as then he perceived them) was said to be appropriate, “...not that bareness is good in itself...” This might also be linked to his views on economy as well as to those on the inappropriateness and uselessness of present-day ornament.⁴⁴ Economy is associated with some of the world’s greatest pieces of sculpture, Lethaby wrote in the following passage, while the role of “genius” was played down:

I can assure anyone that there was no free exercise of genius by Phidias; in his day temple statues were as much a matter of course as railway trucks are in ours...Even in the detailed design of his statues...the poses were arranged and the limbs adjusted to cut economically from the precious blocks of material. Genius was cheap but marble was very dear. It is actually on record that it was the same with M. Angelo [Michelangelo]: it was his supreme gift to see how he could get a statue out of a block without cutting to waste.⁴⁵

Later in this 1921 series, a major part was devoted to function and fitness (the section in fact entitled “Function, Finish and Fitness”).⁴⁶ An interesting reference appears two years later in Lethaby’s series “The Building Art: Theories and Discussion” in The Builder. He quoted from Boswell’s Johnson to support his view on architectural utility:

[Samuel] Johnson expressed his disapprobation of ornamental architecture such as magnificent columns supporting a portico, or expensive pilasters supporting merely their own

⁴² Ibid., p. 36. As enigmatic as the saying ascribed to Mies van der Rohe: “Less is more”?

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 40 and 42 (last two sentences).

⁴⁴ “The Workmanship Basis” – Part III of “Modernism and Design,” 4 March, 1921, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Part XI, “Modernism of Design,” The Builder, 4 Nov., 1921, pp. 608-609.

capitals, ‘because it consumes labor disproportionate to its utility...A building is not at all more convenient for being decorated with superfluous carved work.’⁴⁷

1925-1931

In Lethaby’s comments on architecture in Philip Webb (originally set down in 1925), his admiration for Butterfield and Shaw seems to grow at least partially out of functionalist considerations. In a footnote explaining Butterfield’s Keble College: “...there are two modern styles of architecture: one in which the chimneys smoke, and the other in which they do not.” From Shaw, Lethaby remembered the remark: “The backs are always better than the fronts.”⁴⁸ In 1926, in a letter to Harry Peach, concern for “fitness” appears again as he quoted a passage to his liking from John Gloag’s recent book Artifex; or the Future of Craftsmanship: “‘Fitness for purpose is a test that should be applied to all the products of craftsmanship, to architecture and to engineering...’ This last phrase...is worth remembering; it is what all architects should be thinking of, and dreaming of, and working for.”⁴⁹

“Service”, “utility” and “purpose” are concepts Lethaby dealt with again in his “Art and Community” series in The Builder in 1930. Lethaby, in two passages addressing the idea of service, drew on the notion of mystery, first, unconvincingly, as a beneficial resultant of “stern reality” (one wonders how, exactly) and secondly, as something to be avoided. First:

Stern reality would bring back mystery to our art once again. Oh, the arguers will say, reverting to our usual word confusions, ‘When all this is done the result will be purely mechanical.’ To be purely anything serviceable would be a given; modern architectural work in the styles is far less than mechanical in human value.

And then:

By narrowing and specialising our views of art we are necessarily restricting the fields of its application. If art [including architecture] is a generally reasonable service, the people will see that they need it. If, on the other hand, we teach them that it is a bogey mystery which

⁴⁷ Part IV, “Testimony,” op. cit., 6 April, 1923, p. 566.

⁴⁸ Op.cit. (1935 book version). These last two quotes from pp. 68 and 75 respectively. For the latter, Lethaby quoted this but does not say when Shaw said it.

⁴⁹ August 29, 1926.

they cannot understand, and that Mr. X and Mr. Y are needed to explain what it really is, then people will more and more draw back into mere commercialism.⁵⁰

“Service” would justify art; later in the same series but approached differently, art was, in a sense to be thought of as incorporated into service: “This conception of all the arts, even poetry, as being so many forms of the service of man...”⁵¹ “Utility”, it can be seen in these later writings, is ever an important issue for Lethaby:

...utility...is always spoken of slightly [in aesthetic arguments]. Now mere utility may mean such beautiful things as a sheaf of corn, a barn, a ship. The really utilitarian house chimney, and roof, if we could find out how to build them, would hardly be less artistic than the ship or the loaf of bread.”⁵²

Lethaby’s emphasis on “purpose” – that is, a work being an exact response to particular needs and conditions also appeared in this 1930 series:

I can conceive of a house being such a perfect organism responding to given conditions that it would become a type like a ship, every part would have to be exactly so as in a watch. Would it not be distressing, we may ask, to have houses all alike from Newcastle to Dover? – but that would not follow. Varying conditions could result in constant modifications; utility and reason would cause the solutions to differ from town to town and even from street to street.⁵³

In Lethaby’s last year, utilitarian concerns surfaced, as before. A discussion of light centered around the practical rather than the aesthetic aspects of its architectural employment:

Another principle should be the provision of sufficient light. Last mid-summer I noted that a costly modern London church near my house was lighted for congregational use at noon. At noon in June! Is that reasonable or right? A phrase by [John] Milton about ‘dim religious light’ has probably brought the gas and electric light companies much custom; but is it desirable in our growing poverty [worldwide depression ?] that this unnecessary consumption and waste shall be continued? It has even been suggested to me by a higher

⁵⁰ “Design and Structure” (1930), Part II, The Builder, 7 Feb., p. 309.

⁵¹ Part III: “Aims and Ambitions” (1930), The Builder, 7 March, p. 487.

⁵² “Design and Structure” (1930), Part II of “Art and the Community,” The Builder, 7 Feb., p. 309.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 309-310.

critic of Milton's text that several passages seem to indicate a special sensitiveness to light, and as we all know he was overtaken by blindness.⁵⁴

Too frequent repairs to churches also troubled him: "The question of repairs,...is quite alarming; I wonder if any statistics of annual charges exist. During the last year the tall spires of two Victorian very-Gothic churches nearest where I live have had costly scaffoldings around them."⁵⁵ Two final excerpts (undated) will serve to complete an assembly of Lethaby's pro-functionalist views. In the first, several terms already encountered in Lethaby's other functionalist-related passages are included in this brief recipe for a "true building art": "The ideal of perfect structure, functional, fit, intelligible, clean, economic, exquisite, would give us a true building art once more, organic and developing. We have to substitute the thought of natural law for vagaries of taste, and design in the sham styles."⁵⁶ In the other, we find a poem on the service ingredient in art (or rather what happens when there is a lack of it):

"Art for art's sake
Is the aesthete's mistake
Art only to please
Produces disease"⁵⁷

In Architecture there is Something Beyond Utility

In Lethaby's early sketchbook of 1886 he recorded the historical "conditions" necessary in architecture – Commodity, Firmness, and Delight. While the first two may speak easily to issues of functionalism, the third does not necessarily – unless aesthetic pleasure is thought of as a "function" of a building. For Lethaby, Delight could be a legitimate function of a building and equally, for an Arts and Crafts architect, not only a delight to its user but also its maker. Under the widest definition of functionalism, Lethaby could plausibly include all three historical conditions. But utilitarianism is a good

⁵⁴ "Modern Church Building" (1931), The Builder, 6 Feb., p. 284. In 1923 Lethaby saw new work in the area of lighting as revolutionizing architecture ("Clerks and Artists," 1923, Part VII of "The Building Art: Theories and Discussions," The Builder, 6 July, p. 18.)

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁵⁶ "Renaissance and Modern" (TS, Barnstaple), p. 6.

⁵⁷ Scripts and Scraps (TS, version #1, R. I. B. A. Drawings Collection, poem #23.)

deal narrower a concept than functionalism and, although Lethaby often gave utility great importance, as has been pointed out in some of the foregoing passages, there are times when he was at pains to stress that there was in architecture something more. This occurred, for example, in his early essay, “Of the Motive in Architectural Design” (1889): “Our method of less than haphazard training makes little use of a critical examination of any theory of design; the one propounded still, is that old dogma of utilitarianism, of which [A.W.N.] Pugin was the proponent in the field of architecture.”⁵⁸ Utilitarianism was given fullness of definition by Jeremy Bentham but by him also (perhaps because of the extremities of application that he had advocated) the unattractive sense the term may carry. This unattractiveness surfaces but with the acknowledged power of Bentham’s thought as well in a passage by Lethaby’s ally, Lawrence Weaver in 1919, describing a house in 1919 designed by Morley Horder:

The whole of the housework is light, agreeable, and intelligent. But there is nothing Benthamite in this cottage. It does not strike you as a freak-house, or as the utilitarian contrivance of a crank. Indeed, it is only by living in it and taking part in its ritual that you become aware of its ingratiating conveniences. You discover Bentham hiding under the draperies of William Morris.⁵⁹

Lethaby spoke for a wider view of “architecture” than that encompassed in Pugin’s or Bentham’s utilitarianism. In a passage from 1911, Lethaby argued for something beyond utility, even beyond the purely rational: “If architecture was born of need it soon showed some magic quality, and all true building touches the depth of feeling and opens the gates of wonder.”⁶⁰

In 1920, Lethaby argued that beyond satisfying a building’s utilitarian and other functional requirements at least occasionally there is something in architecture beyond functionalism – although, he said, that is architecture’s essence.⁶¹ In another comment from the same year he said similarly that something lay beyond functionalism (or beyond utilitarianism, at least): “Man is more than a stomach or

⁵⁸ A.A. Notes (1889), Vol. IV, no. 36, November, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Lawrence Weaver, Small Country Houses of Today, Vol. II, 1919, p. 105-106.

⁶⁰ Architecture (1911), op.cit., as found in 1955 ed., p. 9.

⁶¹ “Housing and Furnishing”, repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 38.

legs.”⁶² Much earlier, in 1891, he had stated that the essentials of architecture were not utilitarian (although one can see, as with the foregoing 1920 comment, that a wider view of “function” than that which would just be encompassed by the notion of “utility” could be accepted by Lethaby as the “essence” of architecture.⁶³ One finds a sympathetic contemporary comment from Walter Crane; he described how in the nineteenth century “natural growth in design...was extinguished in the rush of commercial competition and utilitarianism.”⁶⁴

Functionalist Tendencies in Lethaby's Built Work

In Lethaby's own work there is evidence (as in that of his philosophical colleagues and disciples) of an interest in pursuing twentieth century Functionalist principles. In the chapters dealing with Lethaby's attitude toward ornament, materials, and engineering some of this has been pointed out. One can see the plainness of the façade of his house at Four Oaks, and a similar discarding of ornament at “High Coxlease” (as David Martin has observed in his thesis).⁶⁵ In describing “The Hurst” (Four Oaks), Lawrence Weaver wrote of “the delightful simplicity of the entrance hall,” the “restrained furnishing” and the “honesty of purpose.”⁶⁶ John Brandon-Jones in 1970 called attention to the simplicity and directness of Lethaby's church at Brockhampton.⁶⁷ Such qualities, of course, run through other arts and crafts work as well; for example, Randall Well's 1902 church at Kempley (near Brockhampton) is cited by Martin for

⁶² “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 16.)

⁶³ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, p. 1.

⁶⁴ “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings”, Part III of Art and Life and the Building and Decoration of Cities (1897). Originally a series of lectures delivered in 1896 by various people (editor not given), p. 124. But the same lecture shows Crane captivated in a purely utilitarian way by the stark addressing of function found in some gas light fixtures he was describing: “The bare tube or bracket with the turn-tap burner was all that they actually needed, and anything superadded was apt to take the unfortunate look of ornamental excrescence, because really unrelated...” (p. 122).

⁶⁵ Op. cit., p. 87.

⁶⁶ Small Country Houses of Today, Vol. I, pp. 79 and 82.

⁶⁷ “After William Morris” (1970), Artifex, Vol. 4, John Brandon-Jones, p. 57. Brandon-Jones, however, did seem to have reservations about other aspects of the building.

the “plainness” of its interior.⁶⁸ Davey has pointed out how, behind a symmetrical façade, Lethaby’s “completely asymmetrical” plan provided for the Eagle Insurance Building responded directly, in a “modern” way to the building’s program.⁶⁹ Similarly, plain exteriors are obvious in Gimson’s work (for example, Lea Cottage – 1898; White House, Leicester – 1897; Bedales School addition – 1910, or his chairs). E.S. Prior’s House at Lavant, Sussex, was cited by Weaver as “straight forward” and he called attention to how, compatible with modern doctrine, the outside of the house expresses the essence of the arrangement of the inside.⁷⁰ Work of the London County Council Architect’s Department, predominantly staffed at one time with followers of Lethaby, was described by John Brandon-Jones as simple and direct. This included, for example, the Millbank Estate. Also Alastair Service has written favorably of the countless “austere” buildings the Department built before World War I, (for example. Winmill’s Fire Station on Eaton Avenue, Hampstead from 1914-1915.⁷¹

As Robert Macleod has observed, Lethaby’s functionalism is really a wider kind (wider than orthodox definitions of twentieth century functionalists seems to allow). Functionalism for Lethaby included iconography and visual symbolism.⁷² Kenneth Frampton has observed that Lethaby equated symbolism with a desire for poetic content which then, by extension, must be a part of functionalism too. Frampton has maintained (but not too convincingly) that in later years Lethaby moved away from this concern for poetic content and by 1910 was arguing against, at least, any self-conscious effort to introduce it into architecture. He cited Lethaby from 1910: “Building has been and may be an art,

⁶⁸ Martin, p. 116.

⁶⁹ Davey, p. 126.

⁷⁰ Small Country Houses of Today (1919), Vol. II, p. 121.

⁷¹ Service, Edwardian Architecture and Its Origins, 1975, p. 407.

⁷² Macleod, 1971, p. 67.

imaginative, poetic, even mystic and magic. When poetry and magic are in the people and in the age they will appear in the arts...there is not the least good in saying let us build magic buildings.”⁷³

If functionalism can include visual symbolism then it must include many kinds of ornament because there is symbolic content there. Various approaches to ornament occur in Lethaby's work, however. Sometimes there is none to speak of; sometimes, in line with Lethaby's interest in responding to custom and tradition, it is historically referential, if not copyist. Again, more in the mainstream of Arts and Crafts activity, the ornamentation is there in Lethaby's designs but abstracted somewhat compared to more literally referential productions of the earlier nineteenth century. And one can see Lethaby, in some of his architectural designs at the Royal Academy in London from 1881, working in historical styles – mostly Tudor.⁷⁴ For his church at Brockhampton, the use of thatch for the exterior roof cover for the nave may have been prompted strictly by the material's practical features, but the way it is cut and shaped is clearly linked to past practices. The local Ross Gazette newspaper, at the time of the church's opening, described the thatched roof as “old-fashioned”.⁷⁵ Directly historical also is the exterior Lombardic arcading along the cornice of the church's main tower and the intricate chandelier in the nave interior. The bricked-in arches in the church's west wall seem not so much to be structurally needed but rather a referent to past building practice. These touches seem hardly different in regard to approach to ornament from conventional nineteenth century Gothic Revival practice. The panels of flowers Lethaby designed for the choir stalls, however, and the carved ornament on the baptismal font, seem in their simplified quality, more obviously the Arts and Crafts approach. The nave interior is clean and stark in the best functionalist (by any definition) tradition.

Some of Lethaby's tendencies towards “antiquarian” symbolism surface also at his house at Avon Tyrrell (some of the door details) but much of the ornament there is of the reductive type more readily identified with the Arts and Crafts Movement – for example, the relief panel with the gamboling deer (on

⁷³ Frampton, 1980, p. 49-50.

⁷⁴ Martin observed this in his 1957 thesis on Lethaby, p. 44.

⁷⁵ “Opening of Brockhampton Church”, Ross Gazette, Ross-on-Wye, 23 Oct., 1902, p.3, col.4.

the garden façade), and the plaster work with the vegetal motifs in the dining room. For Lethaby, these ornamental devices had to “function” in some way.⁷⁶ Lethaby’s Eagle Insurance Building in Birmingham has a broad, checkerboard design in the uppermost register of the main façade, with large plain rondels superimposed and a “rippling” cornice above – supplying a symbolism perhaps arcane.⁷⁷

Among smaller pieces of Lethaby’s design work, the cover of the baptismal font (from 1918) Lethaby designed for St. Margaret’s in Rochester may be regarded as intricate, almost fussy. Likewise is the font (1890) he designed for the Church of St. John, the Baptist, in Low Bentham, Lancaster. Its intricate, spidery form is quite historicizing. On the other hand, for the remodeling of Stanmore Hall (1889), working in collaboration with the Morris firm, the panel over the fireplace Lethaby designed for one of the rooms (Room “C” on the drawings) shows a large tree schematized in the arts and crafts mode.⁷⁸ Lethaby’s functionalism, as practiced then, if his designed ornament is considered and we allow that it was sometimes intended to serve a purpose through acting as symbol, often embraced something more than strict utilitarianism.

Appraisal of Lethaby as a Functionalist by Others

A few appraisals by other writers about Lethaby’s role as a functionalist are worth noting at this point. Basil Ward, in a series of lectures on Lethaby delivered in London in 1954, offered: “Lethaby was one of the earliest in advancing the theory of functionalism in architecture and industrial design, as opposed to the derivative use of historical style.”⁷⁹ A few years later (1957) Ward, who was Professor of Architecture at the Royal College of Art (a post named for Lethaby), stated similarly (although here using “utility” and “function” almost interchangeably: “He saw salvation in architecture only if it were to have a

⁷⁶ In the gable at Melsetter House, Lethaby provided more symbolism: a six-pointed star and two hearts divided into four parts.

⁷⁷ There are also some oddly non-functional balconies on the façade.

⁷⁸ From the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection.

⁷⁹ Monday, November 29, third in a series entitled “W.R. Lethaby and his Times,” given at the Royal College of Art, London.

true ‘basis in utility’; in other words, in functionalism and constructionism.”⁸⁰ Brian Thomas, Master of the Art Worker Guild (and the grandson of Lethaby’s first architectural employer, Alexander Lauder) also commented on the functionalist side of Lethaby’s thinking at this centennial gathering in Lethaby’s honor, but suggested that it was only one side of Lethaby’s dual nature:

...it seems to me that Lethaby never really resolved a dichotomy which remains an issue to this day, one side of him thirsting for pure functionalism in architecture, the other side longing to make more use of decorative craftsmanship, which strictly speaking is a non-functional embellishment.”⁸¹

The dichotomy observed by Thomas could only be identified, however, if one were to label Lethaby as a narrower type of functionalist than his own thought seems to bear out. Posener, however, did see this same dichotomy, describing Lethaby in 1964, as a functionalist who accepted technics and science as the foundation of a new architecture but also defended manual work against the machine. Like Thomas, Posener felt that Lethaby never resolved this contradiction.⁸²

Some writers have wanted to emphasize more anti-functional attributes in their comments about Lethaby. A contemporary critic, Bagenal, wrote in The Builder in 1921: “Professor Lethaby is a romanticist who wakes at intervals and repeats aloud: ‘I must be actual.’”⁸³ Stephen Bayley, commenting in 1975 on Lethaby’s early thought as found in Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891) wrote: “...his debts to authors of the curious ephemera of the 1890’s, and his anxious accumulation of arcane lore relevant to buildings, will surprise readers looking for overt traces of functionalist doctrine.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰ R.I.B.A.J., April, 1957. “William Richard Lethaby, 1857-1931, A Symposium in Honour of his Centenary” – Part III: “The Whole Man”, p. 22.

⁸¹ Ibid. Part I – “Formative Years”, p. 219.

⁸² Anfänge..., Julius Posener, 1964, p. 28.

⁸³ “Modernist Tendencies and Victorian Criticism – A Reply to Professor Lethaby” (1921), H. Bagenal, 21 Jan., p. 92. (This was a reply to writings by Lethaby appearing two weeks earlier in the same periodical.)

⁸⁴ Stephen Bayley, “W. R. Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition”, R.I.B.A.J., April, 1975, p. 31. (These were comments apropos the recent reprinting of Architecture, Mysticism and Myth.) There are also a few pages on Lethaby in Nikolas Pevsner’s and J. M. Richards’ The Anti-Rationalists (1973).

Lethaby and German Functionalism

A number of writers have noted the connection between the emergence of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England and subsequent architectural developments in Germany. The main thrust of the various observations is that the Arts and Crafts in England acted as a catalyst to and influence on architectural activity along similar lines in Germany. Moreover, as the main impetus of Arts and Crafts orthodoxy later ebbed in Germany (as it did also in England), those components of the Movement which were Functionalist-related endured and became a part of Germany's seminal contributions to the development of architecture's Modern Movement. It is difficult to determine exactly, as to the Modern Movement's Functionalist ingredients, which were derived from English activities, which were the outcome of previous native development in Germany, and which should be ascribed to other sources. But in any event, England clearly played an important role.

In Chapter I, Lethaby's association with the German architect, Hermann Muthesius was mentioned. Muthesius, stationed with the German Embassy in England specifically sought to learn from recent developments in English architecture and, during the first years of the twentieth century, transmitted his knowledge of such developments to Germany – in the process producing the well-known and influential Das Englische Haus volumes. Lethaby was one of the English architects with whom Muthesius had important contact. Possibly Lethaby, because of his position of importance as a spokesman for the Arts and Crafts and his important professional position in London (Principal of the London Central School of Arts and Crafts) was Muthesius' prime contact among English architects.

The first Anglo-German cultural exchanges which might [have] affected twentieth century Functionalism in architecture flowed from England to Germany. Muthesius talked with Lethaby and other Arts and Crafts architects in the British Isles and visited their built work. His transmittal of knowledge on the subject coursed, no doubt, through a number of channels – reports to the German government, interaction with German architects, etc. The vehicle for the most widespread diffusion in Germany of what Muthesius had learned about recent English architecture came through his publications, however.

Lethaby's, besides influencing Muthesius' general interpretation of English Arts and Crafts architecture in these publications was also represented in them himself through his own design work. It is interesting to note some of the words Muthesius used to describe Lethaby's Avon Tyrell in volume 1 of Das Englische Haus (1908). Muthesius praised the "cleanly" and "pure" qualities of the building. Of the interior, he wrote, "color is 'renounced' and the walls and ceiling shine in a modest white." Fireplaces are "straightforward" and forms show "great reservation." He continued by saying that all of Lethaby's studies show the "most austere, stringent work character."⁸⁵ Also in Volume I of Das Englische Haus, Muthesius illustrated the spare, plain Workers Houses of the Boundary Estate, London (designed by Lethaby's disciples associated with the London County Council.⁸⁶ In the second volume of Muthesius' Das Englische Haus (1910) coverage of Lethaby's house at Four Oaks (near Birmingham) included a view which seems specially selected to emphasize the clean and crisp lines and the minimal ornamentation.⁸⁷

In the second decade of the twentieth century the flow of influence between Germany and England is reversed and this can be seen especially in the functionalist-related passages written by Lethaby in 1915. In "Design and Industry" from that year, Lethaby pointed to Germany as the place to watch in

⁸⁵ Muthesius, p. 151.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 205. Some of Shaw's Bedford Park work dating from the time Lethaby was designing for him was also illustrated.

⁸⁷ Vol. II (1910), p. 170. A number of Shaw's works, done while Lethaby was employed there, are also illustrated. Lethaby very likely had a hand in most of works illustrated: "Dawpool" (1882-86), "Sunninghill" ("Broadlands," 1879-80), Alderbrook Cranleigh (designed 1879, executed 1880-82), Albert Hall Mansions, London (originally designed 1876-77, new plans 1879-81, Westblock, 1882 – executed 1883-84, east block – designed 1884, executed 1885-86), Alliance Insurance Building (1882) as well as the earlier, Lowther Lodge (designed 1872, executed 1873-75), #68 Cadogan Square, London (1878-79), Row houses in Chelsea (around 1879) and the later work, "The Hallams" (Surrey, 1894-95). In the third volume (1911), a view of the dining room at Four Oaks was shown and an interior view of Shaw's "Dawpool" which may have, indeed, been produced by Lethaby's hand. In a later work on English architecture, Die Neuere Kirchliche Baukunst in England Muthesius illustrated Lethaby's font cover for the church at Low Bentham and the following churches by Shaw, the last of which, at least, involved Lethaby's design talents: St. Michael's Church (Bedford Park, designed 1878, executed 1879-82 with an addition in 1887; a church at Richard's Castles, Shropshire, a church in Swanscombe, Kent, and the Harrow Mission Church on Latimer Road, London.

furniture design, referring to the “paring away of extraneous excrescences”.⁸⁸ Efficiency is a laudable quality Lethaby emphasized in another of his compositions of the same year – one specifically dedicated, despite the bellicose state of affairs between Britain and Germany, to the praise of German cities – “Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn from It”:

...when modern German effort in city-building is praised, people ask me, ‘But do you like it?’ It is a difficult question. Remember how little we really like before asking me if I like the hardness, glare, brutality of modern Hanover, Strasburg, Magdeburg. or Cologne. They were not built for me to like, they were built for themselves. Besides, do I like modern Paris or London? Well, I don’t. I do, however, greatly admire the wonderful efficiency and ambition of the Germans in city organisation.⁸⁹

Lethaby kept informed of developments in Germany both by visiting there (see Chapter 1) and through publications. It could hardly have been otherwise when one thinks how the British Design and Industries Association, which Lethaby helped found, emulated the Deutscher Werkbund. Amongst Lethaby’s correspondence at the R.I.B.A. offices is an item from December 3, 1915, in which is mentioned a Werkbund article which Lethaby’s friend (and D. I. A. leader) Harry Peach had sent him for evaluation. In regard to developments in German architecture in the second and third decade of this century, Lethaby would surely have found his point of departure. While he would have been in agreement on such fundamental points found in, say, Bauhaus emphases such as “efficiency,” “economy,” “utility,” “conformance to purpose,” “direct expression of purpose,” and use of science in developing new material and methods, he would surely have been alienated by the “factory aesthetic” mode of expression arrived at. Lethaby’s requirements for “fitness for purpose” (forms appropriate to their particular milieu) would certainly not be met (as Lethaby himself would judge then) by a number of Germany’s hard-edged, mechanism-like designs. Also, Lethaby’s view of functionalism was wider than that encompassed in the main body of Functionalist thought in Germany – for example, in regard to the use of symbolism.

⁸⁸ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 51.

⁸⁹ Originally an address delivered to the Architectural Association, January, 1915 (published in Form in Civilization, 1922, p. 105).

Certainly symbolism existed in the German architecture referred to and it was there for a purpose, but it was not the custom or tradition-related symbolism which Lethaby thought desirable in buildings.

Summary

In this chapter, material relating to Lethaby's position within the body of functionalist thought has been discussed. Examples of his writing related to this subject from various periods of his life have been brought forth and the various aspects of what may be "functionalist" about them have been highlighted. Lethaby certainly mentioned functionalist-related criteria often enough and with enough enthusiasm to establish him as a factor in dialogues about functionalism. But it also can be seen that "function" for Lethaby was so wide a concept that it would accept attributes beyond those which could be included in the usual descriptions of twentieth century Functionalism (with a capital F). Later in this chapter, evidence of Lethaby's functionalist attitudes appearing in his own designs was brought up. Finally, Lethaby's relationship to functionalism in Germany is discussed.

The next chapter will discuss Lethaby's ideas about value and meaning in architecture. For Lethaby, function (as he defined it) figured prominently in determining value.

CHAPTER VI

MEANING AND VALUE IN ARCHITECTURE

This chapter will help illuminate Lethaby's interest in the "human" side of architecture. When discussing "art" or "architecture" as subjects, Lethaby very often would work his way quickly from the physical object in question to the human who was interacting in some way with this object—either as the maker (or creator) or as user or "consumer." The discussion which follows will first address Lethaby's thoughts on how architectural objects are, or should be, perceived. When someone looks at a work of architecture, what should they get out of it and what should be there? Tied closely to this is Lethaby's concept of the object itself. What the architectural object is and what it means leads one directly to Lethaby's ideas on symbolism and to what is one Lethaby's most notable areas of contribution to modern discussion of architecture—his notions about the irrational in architecture and the mystical and the magical.

There are also some much less esoteric architectural attributes which played an important role for Lethaby in the process of appreciating or perceiving architecture. "Workmanship" in particular falls into this category and also merits, with a few others, some discussion. A second section of this chapter will deal with Lethaby's concern for the creator of the architectural object and what is important in the relationship between "maker" and "thing made." The final section will attempt to further clarify Lethaby's position on meaning and value in architecture, in particular how it relates to those who bring a work into being and those who subsequently experience it, by discussing attitudes held on the same subject by some critics and aestheticians who were Lethaby's contemporaries.

One way to appreciate an object of art, traditionally, is to determine if it has "beauty;" if it has that, which is by most perceptions a "good" quality, then the object is at least in some sense valuable. Lethaby discusses beauty in his 1918 essay "What Shall We Call Beautiful." Beauty is not the thing itself, wrote Lethaby, but "the idea of beauty arises in us." In the 1918 essay Lethaby notes a list of the kind of attributes an object might have which could serve to call forth in the perceiver's mind, the idea of beauty.

The list seems fairly inclusive and it probably is to be inferred that an object need not possess all of the listed attributes in noticeable measure in order to bring the notion of beauty welling up within us upon confrontation. This list includes a number of “formal” qualities which Lethaby usually tried to de-emphasize. These include “completeness,” “order,” “color,” and “rhythm.” Other attributes might be “personal association” (the house that one personally owns), “reputation” (it is assumed to be better if done by Michelangelo than by Vasari), or “scarcity” (faced with an exotic marble). The list also includes acknowledgement that something may be found beautiful for reasons far removed from the relatively puritanical orientation of, say, Lethaby’s Methodist upbringing or Fabian Socialist idealism—ideas of “luxury,” “sex-attraction,” “intoxication,” “disease” and “perversion.” Those attributes upon which Lethaby lays the most stress elsewhere are also present and the list in fact begins with some from this category—“service value,” “work desirability” and “fitness for purpose.” Others in this from lay emphasis on the creator of the object—“soul of the maker,” “economy of means,” “intensity” and “sympathy with the maker.” Expression of patriotic values, also important to Lethaby, is also included on the list.¹

In the same 1918 article Lethaby explained “appreciation” as emanating from complex and diverse sources: “...our responses to a work of art spring from no special aesthetic faculty, but from all our loves and loathings.”² Also: “No one could care for beauty produced by formulas.”³ He drew on Plato, crediting him with seeing that the experience of art “must not be related only to delight.”⁴ Appreciation should not be looked at as pursuit of happiness: “...this theory of art as enjoyment is as thin as a theory of manners

¹ “What Shall We Call Beautiful” (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 163. The notions of beauty “arise” along the lines Lethaby indicates in the article although Lethaby felt able to formulate a list of what might induce the thought of beauty if not actually to predict the specific catalyst in a particular case. It is unclear if the situation just described is at odds with Lethaby’s earlier thinking as demonstrated in an 1885 sketchbook notation (Barnstable) wherein he quoted Emerson (apparently sympathetically) as being anti- a preconceived definition of what is beautiful.

² Ibid., p. 165.

³ See also Lethaby’s Architecture (1911), pp. 3-4 for the comment to the effect that the expressional content of a building is not something that is necessarily consciously embodied.

⁴ “What Shall We...” (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 153.

apart from conduct...”⁵ In a comment filled with hyperbole: “...aesthetic delight in art leads straight to plague and destruction...”⁶ In 1919, in Lethaby’s enthusiastic introduction to Winefride de L’Hôpital’s book on Westminster (Roman Catholic) Cathedral he diminished the role of contemporary fashions in aesthetics and scholarship as principal means of valuation. “The taste and learning of the Cathedral [about the cathedral is] ...exquisite and astonishing but these are supplied to satisfy the patron and his epoch’—they “are the least part of Bentley’s work.”⁷

External Effects

For Lethaby, art (including architecture) can have value because of the effects it brings about. This notion, in Lethaby’s case anyway, grows out of the ideas of his mentor, William Morris and, more generally, out of the general predilection of the socialist viewpoint to lay a certain faith in the “inter-connectedness” or “inter-functioning” of things.⁸ When writings his paen of 1901, “Morris as Workmaster,” Lethaby reminds us that “moral powers” are the aim of art according to Morris, than art is “not to amuse people but to make them brave and just and loving.”⁹ In “What Shall We Call Beautiful” Lethaby claimed that aesthetic activity must be directional, otherwise it is like “snuff-taking.”¹⁰ The question should not be what gives man aesthetic delight but what should—i.e., what is good for him to think beautiful from the standpoint of benefits to the society in which he lives. On must consider where one’s theory of art will lead.¹¹

⁵ Ibid., p. 151. A similar warning was sounded a few years earlier in Architecture: that aiming for a “self-conscious aesthetic appeal” was likely to be dangerous (pp. 3-4).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Westminster Cathedral (1919), first page of Lethaby’s 2-page Intro.

⁸ Reginald Blomfield observed in “W. R. Lethaby—An Impression and a Tribute” (1932), in one of the perhaps less tribute-oriented passages, that Lethaby approached architecture not as an architect but as a socialist (“an innocent socialist”), p. 10, R.I.B.A. Journal, Vol. 39, #8 (paper read before the R.I.B.A., February, 1932).

⁹ Morris as Workmaster, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁰ “What Shall We...” (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 160.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 160.

Elitist Art

Valid art should be universal and not elitist. One finds Lethaby singling out a quote from Morris in his 1886 sketchbook: "I do not want art for a few, anymore than education for a few. No rather than art should live this poor thin life among a few exceptional men, despising those beneath them for an ignorance for which they themselves are responsible, for a brutality which they will not struggle with, rather than this, I would that the world, should indeed, sweep away all art for awhile."¹² Whatever natural instincts about art the poor do possess surpasses that of the rich if one may judge from his sympathetic quoting of Stephen Reynolds' A Poor Man's House: "...the taste of the poor, the un-educated is on the right lines though undeveloped, whilst the tastes of the educated consists of beautifully developed wrongness, an exquisite secession from reality..."¹³

Workmanship and Its Expression

"Work" is a word much emphasized in prose and paint in the later nineteenth century. In the latter category one might immediately think of Ford Maddox-Brown's important oil of the same name (executed 1852-1865) or Jean-Francois Millet's The Gleaners (1857). In the writing medium Lethaby continued Ruskin's and Morris' emphasis on the importance of work to life and did so well into the twentieth century. "Work is a great necessity, one of the absolute things."¹⁴ A few years later (1920), in a letter to his friend Harry Peach, Lethaby indicated an almost religious esteem in which he thought labor should be placed: "If the world is to go on I am convinced a new honour and recognition of labour as in itself saintly and martyrly will have to be felt and taught."¹⁵

Lethaby emphasized that the expression of the maker, his "humanity," is important in evaluating art. In his early paper on cast iron (1890), his opening contains a quote from Ruskin from the Stones of

¹² From Lethaby's 1886 sketchbook at Barnstaple.

¹³ "What Shall We..." (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 165.

¹⁴ "The Foundation in Labour," published in The Highway (1917) and repr. in Form in... (1922).

¹⁵ Letter of January 12, 1920, repr. in Friends of a Lifetime (1940), ed. by Viola Meynell (pp. 136-137). Earlier, in his "Of the Motive," AA Notes (1889), p. 4, Lethaby wrote of the necessity of each craft upholding its honor.

Venice to the effect that the value of a work or art should be based on “the humanity expressed in it.”¹⁶ In 1918, Lethaby related beauty in art closely to “work” and to the artist: “Beauty in Art is the evidence of high humanity in work.”¹⁷ A few years later in his series “Modernism and Design” in The Builder of 1921, Lethaby maintained that workmanship (and material) “...have been everything in the arts...in art thus approached through material and workmanship there is a solidarity and depth and this has a human value which art produced on ‘an ideal basis’ can never have.”¹⁸ Near the beginning of another article in The Builder, “Architecture as Engineering,” Lethaby stressed the importance of “preserving reverence for nobility of workmanship.”¹⁹ One gets the impression that, for the perceiver, a work of art cannot be sufficiently appreciated without also calling forth the image of the work’s creator, laboring at his task: “...but what good is a design without the marvelous toil which brings it into actual being?”²⁰

Meaning and Value Through Symbols and Beliefs

In his essay “Exhibitionism at the R. A.” (1920), Lethaby suggested that the capacity of various visual art forms both to communicate and perform other functions may vary—all art contains both “doing and “saying.” Architecture he distinguished as an art form which does more and says less.²¹ Even so, Lethaby believed that architectural works could communicate and could signify quite a lot. One of the most interesting aspects of Lethaby’s point of view is the connection Lethaby found in architecture between the built work and the “world view” of the society that produced it. An analysis of this connection lead Lethaby to the conviction that architecture might embrace, besides sound craftsmanship,

¹⁶ “Cast Iron and Its Treatment for Artistic Purposes,” Journal of the Society of the Arts, Vol. 38, February 14, 1890, p. 272.

¹⁷ “What Shall We...” (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 167.

¹⁸ Part III of “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, March 4, 1921, p. 285.

¹⁹ “Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

²⁰ House Painting—Ancient and Modern, n.d. (7-page pamphlet), p. 3.

²¹ “Exhibitionism...” (1920), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 179.

effective usage of materials and the like, an irrational element—a quality which was inexplicable by conventional means of analysis or which was, in fact magical.

Two general ideas in Lethaby's thought are closely intertwined: 1) there have been and still are supernatural aspects of works of art, including architecture and 2) that art, including architecture, sometimes serves not to symbolize or represent some other small element of the real world (a portrait bust of a particular person, for example) but instead may symbolize or represent some larger concept like the organization of the world or the structure of the universe itself. From Lethaby's discussions of these two general ideas come his applications of the words "magic," "mysticism" and the like to architecture and his perception of the potential of some architectural works to function as powerful symbols. Sometimes, Lethaby's idea of what is magical in a work of architecture is clearly explained; at others, the word and others like it seem to be employed in a manner purposely avoiding further explanation—as if Lethaby desired, in a romantic way, that there should be something super-rational in architecture. One becomes aware of the magic, but analysis should be avoided. Perhaps the situation is similar to that having to do with humor—i.e., the notion that analyzing what is funny about a joke may destroy part of the essence of its funniness.

In Style and Society (1971), Robert Macleod observed that what separated Lethaby from other Arts and Crafts thinkers (and indeed from other modern writers on architecture) was Lethaby's contention that architectural forms derive not only from building technology but also from metaphysics although Macleod notes that this is a "careless metaphysics."²² The first major indication of Lethaby's interest in such matters comes with the publication in 1892 of his first book, Architecture, Mysticism and Myth. He stated in it that he had been collecting the material for some years and one finds, for example, in one of his sketchbooks from 1887, a reproduction of an "oriental world symbol."²³ Regarding the translation of

²² Macleod, p. 57.

²³ R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, London.

such symbols into brick and stone Lethaby has much to say in his book and Stephen Bayley observed in 1975:

...Lethaby's first book assumes great importance. Architecture, Mysticism and Myth broke new ground in that, in his attempt to discover what he called the 'esoteric sources' of architecture, Lethaby was among the first of modern writers to stress the importance of symbolism in architecture, in opposition to utilitarianism and the rigid laws of classical, axial planning.²⁴

Some of the chapter headings in Lethaby's book must have seemed (and still may seem) unusual when compared to those usually encountered in books on architecture. Chapter I, II, and IV are entitled respectively "The World Fabric," "The Microcosmos" and "At the Centre of the Earth." Further on, one finds "The Planetary Sphere," (Chapter VI) and "The Golden Gate of the Sun" (Chapter VIII). Chapter IX and X titles are paired similes—"Pavements Like the Sea" and Ceilings like the Sky." At the end (Chapters XI and XII) are "The Window of Heaven" and Three Hundred and Sixty Days" and "The Symbol of Creation."

In Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, Lethaby wrote of the existence of a mythology of architecture and, in an undated manuscript on aesthetics states that: "...for myself, I admit that I require a mystical supplement to that strictly critical view of beauty and art with which I am now concerned."²⁵ This romantic outlook can be observed in Lethaby's later years as well, as in this excerpt from a talk he gave in 1910 to the R.I.B.A.: "Building has been, and may be, an art, imaginative, poetic even mystic and magic. When poetry and magic are in the people and in the age, they will appear in their arts, and I want them, but there is not the least good in saying 'Let us go to and build magic buildings. Let us be poetic.'"²⁶ In one of his last articles ("The Spirit of Antiquity," 1930), Lethaby's sustained interest in the whole supernatural aspect of architecture is still evident. After quoting Sir James Frazer's assertion that

²⁴ "W. R. Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition," R.I.B.A. Journal, April, 1975, p. 31.

²⁵ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), as found in the 1975 reprinting, p. 8. The quote is from one of Lethaby's manuscripts at Barnstaple.

²⁶ From a bachelor's thesis on Lethaby by David Selby Martin, University of Manchester. Originally dated September, 1957, p 82.

“...magic may with some show of reason be called the nursing mother of art...” Lethaby adds: “...little, however, has yet been done to explain the development of architecture from this point of view, yet, it is evident that buildings erected for magical purposes would themselves have been magical.”²⁷

In Architecture, Mysticism and Magic, Lethaby began his discussion of the supernatural in architecture by discussing modes of thought in primitive times. The world, he wrote, was thought of then as a “tent”—it was a world conceived in structural terms much as a building is.²⁸ Particularly for religious building, he wrote, there has been a special relationship between architecture and beliefs about the structure of the universe.²⁹ He connected the Story of Job and the idea of the world as a box.³⁰ The early ideas of “centers” and “boundaries” had a “universal mystery” intrinsic in them, he wrote.³¹ Lethaby referred to a then recently published book by De La Saussaye (Manual of the Science of Religion, 1891) to reinforce the idea that the symbolism of temple buildings sometimes referred to the structure of the world.³² A few pages later Lethaby called the reader’s attention to what he found to be the similarity of forms in different cultures. These go beyond such considerations as tradition, similar needs, and the limits of technology, Lethaby wrote. They are based on known (held in common?) and imagined facts of the universe.³³ Early literature described the world, he said, in architectural (as well as in zoological and botanical) terms and “...the earth shut in by the night sky, must have been thought of as a living creature, a tree, a tent or a building...”³⁴ Quoting another author, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, Lethaby explained that earlier man believed that “...we live, as it were, upon the ground floor of a great house, with upper stories

²⁷ “The Spirit of Antiquity,” Modern Building, Thursday, September 8, 1930, p. 4.

²⁸ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), as found in 1975 reprint, p. 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 8

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8 and 10.

rising one over another above us, and cellars down below.”³⁵ Lethaby wrote also: “...one cannot but see that there must have been a relation and reaction between such a world structure and the buildings of man, especially the sacred buildings set apart, as they mostly were, for a worship that thought it found its object in earth, sky and stars.”³⁶ He enlisted the aid of Philo and Josephus, reminding us that they stated around the time of Christ, that “...there was a relation between the design of the temple and the world.”³⁷

In other places, one can also find Lethaby’s interest in the idea of early architecture as a model or symbol of the structure of the world. In the manuscript “Ritual” (undated) Lethaby referred to the relationship between “the cosmos” and architecture, and writes that he is convinced that early temple architecture: “...was a local reduplication of that temple not made with hands, the world fabric itself. A sort of model to scale; its form governed by cosmogonic sciences of the time...a heaven, an observatory and an almanack.”³⁸ In the typescript “Origins” (also undated) Lethaby explained that the process of building as well was heavily influenced by supernatural beliefs:

Building itself was a magical procedure associated with many rites; the stability of structures depended on certain observances, and what we call ornament protected them from evil spirits. Early sacred building was a work of wonder and decoration was a sort of magical tabooing. Gorgons, Sphinxes, Griffins, the palm and the lotus were all protective and emblems of good luck.³⁹

In Architecture, Mysticism and Myth also, Lethaby referred to the making of objects in early times—to their function as magic amulets, charms, fetishes.⁴⁰

³⁵ Ibid., p. 11. Lethaby cited Tylor’s Early History of Mankind (1865), as his source.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁸ MS “Ritual” (Barnstaple, no date), pp. 1 and 5.

³⁹ “Origins,” TS (Barnstaple, n.d.), p. 4. The idea that ornament originally did something, performed some service besides being something to look at was expressed also in Lethaby’s “The Spirit of Antiquity” (1930): “What we call ornaments and decorations at their origin imitated sacred prototypes or were otherwise magical and protective” (Modern Building, 18 Sept., p. 6).

⁴⁰ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), as found in 1975 reprint, p. 9.

About twenty years after Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, in Architecture (1911), Lethaby stressed two “great factors” in architecture: a) response to need and b) a magical or mystical element:⁴¹ “If architecture was born of need, it soon showed some magic quality and all true building touches depths of feeling and opens gates of wonder.”⁴² Again in “Town Redemption” (1921), Lethaby reacted to [first name?] Balfour’s theory of art saying (to disagree), that a “mystical component” of beauty is required and this, he acknowledged, is difficult to integrate into an aesthetic system. Lethaby went back to Ruskin for support, saying that mysticism has to do with “first causes” and “final causes.” Ruskin, he noted, provided for this in his theory.⁴³

A serialized relative of Architecture, Mysticism and Myth appeared in The Builder in 1928 under the heading “Architecture, Nature and Magic.”⁴⁴ Here again three years before his death, Lethaby showed his interest in this theme as he described how, in early architecture, “...building and ideas of world structure acted and reacted on each other.”⁴⁵ Again, the reader was told that old building “embodied magic.”⁴⁶ The series “Architecture, Nature and Magic” in The Builder was broken down into such headings as “The world Fabric,” “The Templed heaven” and “Rites, Amulets and Proportion”—there is some parallel here with the romance of the 1892 chapter titles. The sources Lethaby consulted for the 1928 effort included the writings of others on magic and symbolism such as: Weltenmantel und Himmelzelt (Robert Eisler, 1910); The Magical Origins of Kings (Sir James George Frazer, 1920); The Migration of Symbols and their Relation to Beliefs and Customs (Donald MacKenzie, 1926); Cults, Myths and Religions (Solomon Reinach, translated by E. Frost in 1912); and From Magic to Science (Charles Singer, 1928).

⁴¹ Architecture (1911), as found in 1955 ed., p. 9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴³ “Town Redemption” (MS, 1921, Barnstaple), p. 19.

⁴⁴ Posthumously published in book form under the same title in 1956.

⁴⁵ Architecture, Nature and Magic, 1956 book version, p. 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

Even nearer the end of his career, in “The Spirit of Antiquity” (1930), Lethaby described how works of antique architecture in an evolution from domestic construction to religious building could relate to notions of the structured universe:

When man had become a builder the walls and covering of his dwelling were the models by which he thought about what was around him and above him. When once the square type of building had been developed, ideas of a four-sided world with gates would have been suggested by the sun rising in the east and going out at the west. The sun gates were, of course, very high, and the four corners of the world strong and immovable. When buildings regarded as specially sacred came to be erected it was quite inevitable that they should partake of the characters of both the cosmic and domestic prototypes, and that the former would be more specially regarded. Thus was established a magic of correspondence between the heavenly temple and its local symbolic representation.⁴⁷

Classical times were, like the primitive, ages of magic for Lethaby.⁴⁸ That quality (or something similar) could be found also in Christian architecture. In Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, Lethaby explained how parts of Christian churches, e.g. the nave and the chancel, could be thought of as symbols of earth and heaven. His mentor and friend, Phillip Webb, must have reinforced Lethaby’s convictions about the strange powers of medieval architecture. In a letter to Lethaby of 1903, Webb wrote: “There was heavy-browed ‘wonder’ built into cathedrals before ‘the wriggings of the great worm’ had straightened art; and ‘wonder’ is, I feel an ‘essential of the Gothic.’”⁴⁹ In Architecture, Lethaby described Gothic architecture as “Frank, clear and mystical” and in later years (see: “Architecture as Structural Geometry” (1929) alluded to supernatural origins for Gothic: “...I see a chief force in the development of Gothic architecture. The ferment worked on northern minds saturating it with the mystery and magic of the forests.”⁵⁰

On associations of mystery and magic in the Renaissance, Lethaby mentions only the

⁴⁷ “The Spirit of Antiquity,” Modern Building, 18 Sept., 1930, p. 5.

⁴⁸ “How Shall We Use Classic,” a review of Langford Warren’s The Foundations of Classical Architecture, The Builder, 21 May, p. 609.

⁴⁹ September 17, 1903, Webb to Lethaby, p. 4, possession of John Brandon-Jones.

⁵⁰ Architecture, 1911, p. 3 and “Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder, 11 Jan., 1929, p. 52.

Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (published 1499)—the mystical romance.⁵¹ He was interested also, however, in the Renaissance use of the egg shape in art.⁵² The egg, Lethaby wrote, had become symbolic of “egg-shaped” conceptions of the world.⁵³ Several medieval writers, he observed—for example the Venerable Bede and Edrisi (an Arabian geographer)—had considered the world to be “oviform.”⁵⁴ Eggs, Lethaby said, were associated with perfection—even with architectural perfection.⁵⁵ One could also use the egg as an architectural symbol of the origin of the world—suspended from a sky-like dome, an emblem of the mystery of life.⁵⁶ Turning to fiction, Lethaby referred to the hanging of an egg in the tales of Aladdin.⁵⁷

Representing mysticism in more modern times, one could cite his interest in Rosetti’s poem Rose Mary and its architectural expressions. In The Architect of January 20, 1888, Lethaby provided an illustration of “the Beryl Shrine” described in Part III of Rose Mary. The relevant lines which were also included are as follows:

The altar stood from its curod recess
 In a coiling serpents life-likeness
 Even such a serpent evermore
 Lies deep asleep at the world’s dark core
 Till the last voice shake the sea and shore

From the altar doth a book rose spread
 And tapers burned at the altar-head;
 And there at the altar-midst alone

⁵¹ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), as found in 1975 reprint, p. 3. Lethaby was familiar with the work from at least 1886 as it is mentioned in a sketchbook of that date.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

‘Twixt wings of a sculptured beast unknown,
Rose Mary saw the Beryl-Stone.⁵⁸

In Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, Lethaby quoted some lines of mystical architectural description—again from Rosetti’s Rose Mary:

The altar cell was a dome low-lit
And a veil hung in the midst of it;
At the pole pointes of its circling girth
Four symbols stood of the world’s first birth
Air and water and fire and earth.⁵⁹

Closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelites was Ruskin, and Lethaby, in the same book, brings up Ruskin’s Seven Lamps of Architecture in discussing relationships between numerology and architecture.⁶⁰ Among contemporary practicing architects, William Burges is singled out. The man’s own house “has mysteries”—it was “strange and barbarously splendid.”⁶¹

Lethaby and the Art of the East

Burges’ house was mention in Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, also because of it “oriental” attributes and also, generally, because of the influence of the Hagia Sophia on Burges. This introduces an aspect of Lethaby’s art-historical contribution which is connected to his interest in mysticism—i.e. his interest in non-western art. As D. Talbot Rice put it; “Lethaby was thus one of the first to accord justice to the Near Eastern world, and one of the first to realise that Western Art could not be fully and truly

⁵⁸ From Andrew Saint, Edwardian Architecture and its Origins, 1975, p. 133. William Blake, whose own mystical illustrations come somewhat earlier, was also of interest to Lethaby if one may judge by the two Blake-derived woodcuts affixed in his sketchbook of 1885.

⁵⁹ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), as found in the 1975 reprint, p. 32.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 254.

understood unless attention were paid to the east Mediterranean and to Byzantium.”⁶² Lethaby himself, in 1892, correlated his book on the “metaphysical aspects of architecture” with the appearance of the Orientalizing of architectural forms—especially the modest Byzantine Revival which began in the last decades of the Nineteenth Century. Two years after Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, Lethaby, in collaboration with Harold Swainson (1868-1894), published an influential monograph on the Hagia Sophia.⁶³ Lethaby and some of his architect friends tried their hand at actually designing in the Byzantine mode with their submission for the Liverpool Cathedral competition of 1902. The compositional massing of the church proper is somewhat Byzantine in the way that the roof forms articulate particular segments of the building, but without the Byzantine building up of a hierarchy of forms. Near the principal entry façade stood a gigantic bell-tower whose bizarre form would be difficult to classify in the vocabulary of the usual historical styles. Octagonal in plan at the base, one is tempted to say Babylonian for no particularly good reason.⁶⁴ Lethaby, a few years earlier, was willing to add mystical elements to the London townscape as well. In his lecture “Of Beautiful Cities” (1896), he suggested for the improvement of London: “...where the road intersected the Strand, a monumental stone might be placed for Golden Milestone and Omphalos of the city and the world.”⁶⁵

This design was far from the first Byzantine-related design to be conceived in England, however. The best example of the revived style remains John Francis Bentley’s Westminster Cathedral, built 1895-1903.⁶⁶ Byzantine elements had appeared even earlier, in the 1880s in the works of Lethaby’s friend

⁶² R.I.B.A. Journal, “W.R. Lethaby, 1857-1931: A Symposium in Honor of his Centenary,” section on “Scholarship and Writing,” R.I.B.A.J., 64, August 1957, p. 223.

⁶³ The year before, Lethaby had visited Turkey with Swainson (who had also been in Shaw’s office from 1890-1892), and met his future wife, the American Edith Crosby on the same trip. See also Lethaby’s article “Sancta Sophia” in the Architectural Review of 1905.

⁶⁴ See drawing and the photos of the model submitted, in the Victoria and Albert Museum Drawings Collection, London.

⁶⁵ From “Of Beautiful Cities” (1896), as included in Art and Life, and the Building and Decoration of Cities, 1897, p. 108. The last lines reveal a somewhat inflated view of London’s importance although perhaps more true then than now.

⁶⁶ As noted earlier, Lethaby wrote an enthusiastic introduction to De L’Hôpital’s 1919 book about it.

Webb—the houses “Clouds” (1881-1886) and the one at Standen (1886), for example. Another close associate of Lethaby, Sidney Barnsley (1865-1926) designed the Church of the Wisdom of God, Lower Kingswood, Surrey, in 1890—four years before Lethaby’s book on the Hagia Sophia. This church shows a more eclectic interest in the Orient. Views of the church show slightly upturned eaves. One enters the churchyard to confront a freestanding pagoda-like bell-tower with an Indian-style (Mughal) loggia on top. One could apparently enter this structure via a steep Mayan-like ramp. Coniferous trees, of an oriental variety, perhaps Japanese, appoint the churchyard. Inside, the apse is given a Byzantine touch, surfaced with mosaics while the ceiling of the nave presents a celestial effect, painted with hundreds of tiny-light-toned “stars” on a dark background.⁶⁷ The church, photos of which were exhibited in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show of 1893, was commented upon in a description of the show as to its “mysticism.”⁶⁸

Less associable with Lethaby, but showing the Byzantine interest in England was the Great Hall at the University of Birmingham (built 1900-1909) by Sir Aston Webb and Ingress Bell.⁶⁹ Slightly later came Beresford Pite’s version of the Byzantine.⁷⁰ Pite also designed the Anglican Cathedral in Kampala, Uganda in 1913 with some Byzantine-inspired parts—one of the principal towers for example.⁷¹ As a later instance of the “mystical” in British church architecture one could cite the chancel ceiling decoration done by MacDonald Gill in 1927 in collaboration with E.S. Prior for St. Andrews, Sunderland (Scotland). The design features a starry ceiling with a dome, representation of the moon, and other decorations of a celestial nature.⁷² There was in England in the same years as the Byzantine Revival, a more general interest in architectural exoticism. Aston Webb and Ingress Bell’s Victoria and Albert Museum (London)

⁶⁷ See David Martin’s thesis, *op.cit.*, for photos.

⁶⁸ Account of the show in *The Studio*, Vol. II, no. 7, October, 1893, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Service, *Edwardian Architecture and its Origins* (1975), p. 332.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁷² See “After William Morris,” *ARTIFEX*, 1910, John Brandon-Jones’ article, p. 62 for illustrations. The church was originally done by E.S. Prior in 1906.

could be cited as representative. Designed in 1891 and built 1899-1909, it featured an almost Islamic-style “frontispiece” at the entrance and a rather Moorish staging of the tower elements. Theatres, of course, with their potential for facilitating viewer escapism, featured an assortment of non-Western architectural elements, apparently inspired as much from American efforts along the same lines as from direct historical borrowing.⁷³ An example was John Burnet’s Alhambra Theatre, Glasgow, from 1910-1911.

Lethaby, in several writings, tried to suggest that present architecture was not of the same character as in former times and that further, if there was to be meaning and magic in the architecture of his own day, it could not be of the same type as in days of old. Old architecture had a purpose and that made it live. Modern architects, he wrote in 1892, must have symbolic content to be viable but that content could not be that used in the past.⁷⁴ Similarly in 1911: “But there are some elements which seem to have disappeared forever, such as: ideas of sacredness and sacrifice, of ritual rightness, of magic, of stability, and correspondence with the universe, of perfection, of form and proportion.”⁷⁵ If Lethaby seemed to say “magic” was gone for architecture, then “science” could be its replacement. There was an abyss between them (people in olden times) and us. They had magic, we have science.⁷⁶ But sometimes science was presented by Lethaby as possibly a new kind of magic—the magic of science, as it were, perhaps recognizing the powers of science to surprise and amaze.⁷⁷ Mystery might also be attained: “In becoming fit every work attains some form and enshrines some mystery...”⁷⁸ Looking to the future, in “The Spirit

⁷³ Service, Edwardian Architecture and its Origins (1975), p. 210.

⁷⁴ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1892), as found in 1975 reprint, p. 9.

⁷⁵ Architecture (1911), as in the 1955 ed., p. 6. See also the TS “Renaissance and Modern” (n.d., 7 pp.) at Barnstable: “The architecture of magic is gone, the architecture of mind and heart remains for us to explore.” (p. 7.)

⁷⁶ Architecture, Nature and Magic, 1956 book version, p. 147, orig. 1928 series published in The Builder.

⁷⁷ Architecture, Nature and Magic, Ibid.

⁷⁸ Architecture (1911), op.cit., p. 11.

of Antiquity” Lethaby offered: “There is a mystery of science as well as magic, it is in front as well as behind.”⁷⁹

Lethaby’s thinking was thoroughly infused with enthusiasm for the romantic, the poetical, and the mystical both in regard to architecture and more generally. Describing with architectural imagery his travels of the summer of 1925, Lethaby wrote from Tintagel: “Three or four times we have had unclouded sunsets and from this height it is an amazing thing to see the burning sun go down beyond the rim of the sea—while the greater half is still floating it looks like an illuminated oriental dome on a pavement of glass. Just as it finally disappears there is a momentary twinkle which the knowing call the ‘green ray.’”⁸⁰

The Artist and His Work

An architectural work is experience by a wide variety of humankind from connoisseurs, clients and owners to people who encounter the building more incidentally. Generally, in reference to the buildings, people can be regarded as “consumers” and in that role partake in the experience of whatever symbolism, mysticism, meaning, etc. that the building has to offer. They arrive, in the process, at some sort of notion about the value of the work in question. Lethaby, however, was interested in another issue also—the interaction between the maker of a work and the object made. He was interested not only in what qualities the worker imparted to the object he was making but also, and this seems to be the more interesting nuance on Lethaby’s part, the effect the object and the process of its making has upon its creator.

Before proceeding directly to this last issue, however, it would be best to first discuss a few related notions. One of these is that, in the production of artistic work, the “thinking” part of the process should be kept very close to the “doing” part and that, ideally, these two functions would be performed by the

⁷⁹ “The Spirit of Antiquity,” p. 5.

⁸⁰ *Scripts and Scraps* (1956), *op.cit.*, p. 55. Assembled by Alfred Powell (from Lethaby’s book *Philip Webb*, 1935, originally Lethaby series on the same subject in *The Builder*, 1925).

same person. In “The Foundation in Labour” (1917) Lethaby remarked that those who work with both hands and brain are more “complete” men than “brain workers.”⁸¹ Earlier (1906), he had written:

We (architects) need...to be in closer touch with the executants of our buildings, and to be anxious to learn from them what they, the artists think is good work, and what improvements of method they can suggest...at present, so far as the imitation of art is concerned, modern architecture is the result of practically servile labour, and of course bears its mark.⁸²

Thus, separation of “thinkers” from “doers” was not to be desired. Lethaby in a letter twenty years later, to Harry Peach, included an excerpt from Peach’s book Artifex; or the Future of Craftsmanship with which Lethaby must have concurred—an assessment which in many respects is similar to his own earlier one: “...today, an architect embalms his inspiration on a drawing board, imposes his will on any army and leaves his name associated with a building erected by collective effort, but not with collective inspiration...” Lethaby added, in the letter, “We have to find an ‘architecture’ which will not puzzle and fret the craftsman artists who actually do the work to our clerkly orders, but which will represent ‘the collective inspiration of our time.’”⁸³ The whole modern situation as he explained in a 1906 essay, was undesirable: “As at present...the profession of architecture is shut away almost completely from a direct relation with workmanship. While this is the case, there is so far as I can see, small possibility of health and intelligent growth.”⁸⁴ He offered as a solution: “It will, I think, be necessary to come to some form of Home Rule in the arts associated with architecture, so that a metal-worker shall be responsible for the design of metal-work, and a glazer for glass, as well as a painter for painting, and a sculptor for sculpture. It is as absurd for an architect to design ornamental metal works as it would be for him to design oil

⁸¹ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 222.

⁸² “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship,” 1906. (with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple; hand-labeled a paper read at the International Congress of Architects, p. 3 of 3 pp. galley-proof?)

⁸³ Lethaby to Peach, August 29, 1926. A similar remark by Lethaby was published in Alfred Powell’s Scraps and Scraps (1956): “When the building direction was removed from the work and shop and ‘took the veil’ in offices, old traditions of workmanship were lost,” p. 20.

⁸⁴ “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship,” p. 1 of excerpt. See also Lethaby’s introduction to C.W. Whall’s Stained Glasswork (1905), p. xii: “Workmanship when separated by too wide a gulf from fresh thought—that is, from design—inevitably decays...”

paintings to be carved out by hireling labour.”⁸⁵ Even earnest recent tries at duplicating the nature of older, more desirable architectural workmanship, he thought, had failed:

Some of our most gifted architects, feeling the workmanlike interest of old architecture, that is, its truly artistic quality, but perhaps understanding its source incompletely, have tried to give their buildings the appearance [this author’s underlining] of interested handiwork and masterly ease; they have designed roughness, and even accidents; they have tried to bring back a semblance of old ways of doing things; but such a procedure is but one more partition between us and the veracities of art, and one more burden to labour thus called in to parody labour.⁸⁶

For Lethaby, the modern industrial system was partially to blame, and one sees here the familiar Arts and Crafts animosity towards the machine:

If one but thinks of the factory system which practically came in with the last century and was so mistakenly looked on as a godsend towards civilisation, and then the result of that “hugger-mugger” breeding, there can be no doubt from this single item above where the chief evil comes from. By the herding of labouring men like herrings in a barrel it had been found out that a class of rich people could be produced whose greed could grasp more than “the dreams of avarice” had forecast...I am as sure of this as of any other thing in humanity, that the contempt for the splendour and wonderfulness of nature, and for the unobserved preciousness of the handiwork of earlier times has resulted from the aforesaid deadly ill-breeding.⁸⁷

Much earlier, Walter Crane, one of Lethaby’s kindred spirits warned of the effects of capitalist industrialization on the “consumer” as well: “With the organization of industry on the grand scale and the enormous application of machinery in the interest of competitive production for profit, when both art and industry are forced to make their appeal to the unreal and impersonal average, rather than to the real and personal you and me...”⁸⁸ Crane could also speak for Lethaby in continuing: “...so that we have reached

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 2 of excerpt.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 1 of excerpt.

⁸⁷ Philip Webb (1935), p. 11 (book version of Lethaby’s articles on Webb appearing serially in The Builder, 1928).

⁸⁸ Catalog preface by Crane for the Second Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (1889), p. 7.

the reductio and absurdum of an impersonal artist or craftsman trying to produce things of beauty for an impersonal and unknowing public—purely conjectural matter from first to last.”⁸⁹

More abstractly Lethaby warned that the isolation of work from art is fatal to both. Art becomes meaningless and work becomes dull.⁹⁰ But the worker had somehow been persuaded to accept a more inferior role in the process of artistic production and Lethaby says this situation can be attributed to conditions in the Renaissance: “The practical building artist was thus terrorized into accepting the belief that his ‘betters’ knew mysteries and correctitudes, and that his part was but to do and obey in working out their whims: a sad business, but so it was and remains.”⁹¹ The artist could revolt, as Lethaby suggested in the last words of Leadwork (1893): “That someone may again take up this fine old craft of lead-working as an artist and original worker, refusing to follow ‘designs’ compiled by another from imperfectly understood old examples, but expressing only himself—this has been my chief hope in preparing the little book now concluded.”⁹²

One of the last phrases of the preceding quotation brings up another important notion of Lethaby’s about the subject of worker-object relationships. That is that it is important the work “expresses” the artist. In his “Modernism and Design” article series (1921), Lethaby observed that most work produced today, perhaps due to the nature of production, cannot, have “heart” in it.⁹³ But, as he contended in the same article “we have to distinguish between the general mass of work which must be executed ‘mechanically’ and some residue which might yet be saved for individual souls to care for.”⁹⁴

Shifting from the issue of expression by the maker as imparted to the created object to the effect of the laboring process on the artist, one comes to yet one more of Lethaby’s major concerns. Lethaby, in a

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹⁰ “What Shall We call Beautiful” (1918), as incl. in Form in... (1922), p. 154.

⁹¹ Philip Webb (1935), p. 64. (orig. 1925 series in The Builder.)

⁹² Leadwork (1893), p. 146.

⁹³ “Modernism and Design,” section entitled “The Workmanship Basis,” March 4, 1921, The Builder, p. 288.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 285.

1901 lecture summarizing Morris' four principle doctrines of art included Morris' dictum that art will redeem labor from being a curse. The effects of labor without art are brought out in a subsequent passage: "If labour is not sweetened by art, that is, made interesting by thought and contrivance, and pride in good quality, it will brutalize those who deal with it." A similar warning from Ruskin is provided: "...industry with art is brutality."⁹⁵ John Brandon-Jones in his article "After William Morris" singles out Lethaby's (and Voysey's) emphasis on "the spiritual satisfaction that could be found in good workmanship..."⁹⁶ Another recent writer, Robert Macleod claims that Lethaby saw ornament, in particular, as a factor of (in fact, existing for) worker satisfaction.⁹⁷

In Lethaby's serial account of Philip Webb (1925), he underlined in Webb's philosophy the belief that the "technical" aims of building should include the pleasure of the worker and Lethaby himself certainly agreed.⁹⁸ In the same serialization, he stressed again, this time through a quote from Morris about Ruskin's Stones of Venice, the crucial importance of the artist's feelings in the production of art: "The lesson which Ruskin teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us today, there have been times when he did rejoice in it."⁹⁹

⁹⁵ "Morris as Workmaster" (1901), lecture at Birmingham Municipal School of Art, Oct. 26, 1901, p. 12 (published 1902).

⁹⁶ Op.cit., p. 56. It is not clear whether Brandon-Jones is referring to spiritual satisfaction extracted from a work of art by a "perceiver" or the benefit the maker would derive. Brandon-Jones' comments (from which the excerpt is taken) parallel the line of discussion of this chapter:

In the architectural pronouncements of the disciples of William Morris, as especially those of Lethaby and Voysey, the main interest seems to have been focused upon details of craftsmanship and material. They spoke of the spiritual satisfaction that could be found in good workmanship and in the tight use of sound materials. Both Lethaby and Voysey were interested in symbolism as a means of adding to the interest of a design, but through all their teaching we find that the reference is more often to matters of detail than to the designing of buildings as a whole. (p. 56).

⁹⁷ Style and Society, op.cit., p. 60.

⁹⁸ Philip Webb (1935), p. 16.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 19.

Contemporary Opposing and Corroborating Views

Geoffrey Scott's The Architecture of Humanism of 1914 was a major defense of classical values in architecture and a major attack on the values of Ruskin, Morris, Webb, and Lethaby. If Scott felt he needed a living person to target from this group it would have to have been Lethaby for Ruskin and Morris had both been dead for a number of years and Webb, in his last years when Scott's book was published, had always led a reclusive life, depending on contact with his small but enthusiastic number of followers to advance his views. Lethaby, of course, was one of those followers, and, at the time Scott's book appeared, easily the most prominent spokesman for Ruskin's, Morris' and Webb's views. At or near the peak of his involvement in professional activity as a prominent teacher at two institutions, Surveyor of Westminster Abbey, active in the R.I.B.A. and as a writer, the 57-year old Lethaby was in a formidable position to effectively express his views. Curiously though, the physical manifestations of Lethaby's theories (and of the others) had already passed into umbrage by 1914. A few prolific practitioners were carrying on in the Arts and Crafts mode, especially Voysey, but the inception of World War I that year and the resultant diminishing of commissions would deal an almost fatal blow to even the latter's highly successful professional life.

Although Scott's book provided a major (and potent) rebuttal to Lethaby's views, it would be difficult to say that the book had any catalytic effect in the production of yet another cyclic wave of enthusiasm for classicism. The classical tide had been rolling in, ever stronger, for decades. Rather, it might be more valid to regard Scott's book as a "shoring up" exercise, to buttress the classical viewpoint against a much more formidable threat than Lethaby in his role as latter-day promulgator of Arts and Crafts ideas represented. This threat came from the modernist camp—with accompanying "anti-classical" approaches to form, composition, ornament and expression of materials and structure. The ideas of Loos, Sullivan, Wright as well as the engineer's aesthetic aided the growing momentum of the Modern Movement. Lethaby, in some sense, though, might be considered a suitable English target for Scott from this standpoint (if a singular figure was indeed needed) because of the links between some tenets of the Modern Movement and their roots in Arts and Crafts philosophy. Lethaby himself, in 1911, had not

begun to make many perceivable changes in his position (and any eventually made still seem not too momentous), away from Arts and Crafts orthodoxy and towards a more identifiably Modernist viewpoint.

Notwithstanding Scott's attempt to take on more than one kind of adversary of classicism at once, there is plenty in his book to provide a direct challenge to Lethaby's views and it should benefit the understanding of Lethaby's position to bring out a few of these opposing ideas. The forward, written by Henry Hope Reed for the 1969 reprinting of Scott's book singles out the two principal challenging hypotheses of the book:

- 1 The ideas of Ruskin and Morris (and Viollet-le-duc) are invalid because they "were derived from sources outside of art—namely from poetry, science, morals and philosophy." (Unfortunately Scott omits trying to persuade us that art is indeed a closed system that cannot admit ideas from other areas of activity nor does he convince us that sources common to art and other matters do not exist.)
- 2 Modernists, Arts and Crafts-niks and others of unsavory aesthetic ilk indulge, in their thought and design actions, in a number of fallacies which Reed proceeds to briefly summarize on Scott's behalf.¹⁰⁰

There is Scott's "Mechanical Fallacy" which included Sullivan's assertion that "form follows function" and "...the contemporary notion that only by adopting new materials and new methods of construction can a new style of architecture be attained."¹⁰¹ There is also the "Romantic Fallacy"—"the very notion of the self-conscious pursuit of a new, unique style—aside from questions of methods in attaining it. The sources of this notion are in literature and it is part of the notion of originality, more especially originality for its own sake—a concept that is rooted in Romantic attitudes. Further, the Romantic fallacy "...is extended to make the architect society's prime mover and shaker." Also, singled out under the Romantic fallacy is "...the strong anti-urban outlook of such American architects as Frank Lloyd Wright, whose acceptance of a simplistic interpretation of nature as a philosophical mainspring for urban design is very romantic." The third fallacy is the Ethical one—Art is made to take on qualities

¹⁰⁰The Architecture of Humanism, Foreword, p. iii, 1969 reprint, paraphrased by this author.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, p. iii.

which are not properly in its province. For example: "...contemporary theory regards ornament as 'false' since it conceals the 'true' nature of construction and materials." The last is the Biological Fallacy—"...the application of nineteenth century theories of scientific evolution to the history of architecture—and to all of art history for that matter."¹⁰²

Reed offered a plainly partisan foreword to Scott's book. Scott himself started more cautiously in his Preface where one can already notice his questioning of notions associated with Lethaby's position: "Architecture, it is said, must be... 'expressive of the national' [whether noble or otherwise] or 'expressive of a noble life' [whether national or not] or expressive of the craftsman's temperament..."¹⁰³ "If these axioms," said Scott, "were frankly untrue, they would be easier to discuss."¹⁰⁴ In the Introduction following the Forward Scott explains that there are two kinds of criticism of architecture, one of which is "essentially historical." This disapproved variety weaves together an account of architecture "...judging one building by standards of constructional skill, another by rhythm and proportion, and a third by standards of practical use or by the moral impulse of its builders."¹⁰⁵ This method, which incorporates, of course some of Lethaby's concerns, "can furnish no general estimate...of style."¹⁰⁶ This shortcoming, for Scott, is a serious one.

Scott in his book used Renaissance architecture and related ensuing developments as the primary material to demonstrate his points. This is not only because he wished to defend and promote the values and traditions common to this body of architectural work, but also because he believed that the inadequacies in the philosophies of his opponents could best be shown up in an examination of, as he described it, the four hundred years of the Renaissance tradition. A survey of this period, Scott wrote,

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. iii-iv, paraphrased.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. iii-iv, paraphrased.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. iii-iv, paraphrased.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁰⁶Ibid. Lethaby himself was greatly interested in dismissing considerations of "style" from his discussion although, as one may see in Chapter VII, he spent a considerable amount of time advising not to talk about such matters.

shows that “while a mechanical analysis or a social analysis might throw light on many aspects of Renaissance architecture, it is only an aesthetic analysis...which can render its history intelligible...”¹⁰⁷ It is, of course, “aesthetic” analysis divorced from all external or extrinsic concerns that Lethaby rejected.

Architecture, with the demands made on it in the name of function, presents a more difficult subject on which to apply a purely “aesthetic” analysis than, say, painting or sculpture. The tactic, for proponents of “aesthetic” analysis includes acknowledgement that architecture is both science and art, and, rather than develop an inclusive method of analysis, one says that one will just talk about the “art” part. This is Scott’s direction as he allowed that “The science...of architecture [is a study] of which the method is in no dispute. But for the art of architecture, no agreement [currently] exists.”¹⁰⁸

In Scott’s following chapter, entitled “Renaissance Architecture,” he explained in more detail why approaches such as Lethaby’s are inadequate for the understanding of Renaissance architecture. He wrote that one cannot find an explanation for Renaissance architecture “among conditions external to art...,” yet “architectural forms, for example are persistently explained by reference to these external factors.”¹⁰⁹ Knowledge of religious and social moments is also inadequate, he wrote.¹¹⁰ “The artistic significance of the style which the Jesuits employed, remains something wholly independent of the uses to which they put it.”¹¹¹ In response to those who emphasize architectural worth as function of its contribution to technology Scott admitted that there were occasions when the discovery of a new structural principle or the use of a new material “started architectural design upon a new path...” but the Renaissance was not one of these.¹¹² Also, Renaissance architecture was simpler, he advanced, and less scientific [today he would appear to be quite wrong about that] than that of the preceding ages. It was “based for the most part

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., first phrase from p. 27, second from p. 28.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 32.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 33.

upon the simplest Roman forms.”¹¹³ Architectural design in the Renaissance was also not dictated much, in Scott’s view, by the materials employed.¹¹⁴ Renaissance architecture in Italy (a geographic qualification inserted) “pursued its course and assumed its various forms rather from an aesthetic, and so to say, internal impulsion than under the dictates of any external agencies.”¹¹⁵ Control in Renaissance architecture was not chiefly a matter of construction or materials but chiefly, Scott argued, “in the taste for form.”¹¹⁶

Taste is the singular omission in the methods of architectural evaluation to which Scott objected: “As an architecture of taste then, we must let it rest, where our historians are so unwilling to leave it, or where, leaving it, they think it necessary to condemn as though there were something degraded in liking certain forms for their own sake and valuing architecture primarily as the means by which they may be obtained.” He continued: “Taste is supposed to be a matter so various, so capricious, so inconsequential and so obscure that it is considered hopeless to argue about it on its own terms.” Rather, he suggested: “The rational course would be to examine the buildings themselves and take the evidence of our sensations. Are they beautiful or not?”¹¹⁷

Those guilty of the Romantic Fallacy must surely have included Lethaby. Generally, the Romantic Movement, in which Ruskin participated in a fundamental way, laid stress “on qualities that belong appropriately to literature, and find place in architecture if at all then only in a secondary degree.” This led to the falsification of the significance of architecture.¹¹⁸

Nineteenth century interest in Medievalism (i.e., the Gothic Revival) was one of the results of Romantic currents in literature, but supplied for Scott a defense of the Renaissance in the same terms:

¹¹³Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 35.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 36.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 38.

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 37 and 38.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 41.

“The cult of medievalism, stimulated by the revival of ballad literature and by antiquarian novelists is not more romanticist than the idealization of antiquity... Why then...should a motive which in the Second and Fifteenth Centuries provide a source of strength [classical values and their subsequent emulation in the Renaissance] be regarded in the Nineteenth, as a disastrous weakness?”¹¹⁹ Efforts to replace the classical tradition with a newly-found medievalism, Scott observed, were bound to be unsuccessful: “To recreate the medieval vision was incongruous with men’s life. The new idea regained a variety of skilled crafts that were irrecoverably lost, and the architect, with nothing but his scholarship, set out to restore a style that had never been scholarly.”¹²⁰ The Greek Revival with its Romantic foundations was, Scott continued, similarly disastrous for the “true” classical tradition, although the vocabulary in this case was much more similar:

In imparting to the Renaissance tradition this literary flavour...the vigour of the Renaissance style was finally and fatally impaired. In obedience to the cult of ‘ideal’ severity it cut down too scrupulously all evidence of life, and when, with the passing of the old order of society, vanished also the high level of workmanship and exquisite ordering of ideas...¹²¹

Scott’s view of the Renaissance seems also to be colored by a Romantic outlook, but returning to the issue of the “medieval revival” as he called it, he wrote that the Romantic movement, “...destroyed simultaneously the interest which was felt in its [Renaissance] principles, and replaced it by a misunderstood medievalism out of which no principles or values could ever be recovered.” Lethaby and allies in the Arts and Crafts, could at least agree with Scott that medieval architecture had been subjected to much misinterpretation at the hands of Nineteenth Century architects but they would have felt that there were still many aspects of life in medieval times fit for emulation. Scott thought the Gothic Revival a more serious misdirection than the Greek, however. It “...exhibited the romantic spirit in a cruder, less

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 42.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 43.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 48.

interesting manner than the Greek movement...” Furthermore, “...it illustrates as abundantly as one could wish, the effect up architecture of an exclusively [sic] literary attitude of mind...”¹²²

Romanticism, Scott wrote, also makes the mistake of regarding architecture as symbolic:

architectural forms...were about this time praised as the architectural image of primeval forests. Some minds find in the work of the medieval builder the record of a rude and unresting energy; others value it as evidence of a dreaming piety. Now, it is an ‘expression of infinity made imaginable;’ next, the embodiment of ‘inspired’ democracy. It is clear that there is no limit to this kind of writing, and we have only to follow the romantic criticism through its diverse phases to feel convinced of its total lack of any objective significance.¹²³

For Scott, antiquarianism was another problem, and perhaps what some have described as Lethaby’s tendency to concentrate at times on details rather than on a wider view of architecture is attributable to his antiquarian inclinations. Scott wrote: “Every period of romanticism, ancient or modern, has, it is safe to say, been a period of marked antiquarianism. The glamour of the past, and the romantic veneration for it, are very naturally extended to the minutiae in which the past so often is preserved, and are bound to lend encouragement to their study...”¹²⁴ This approach, Scott suggested would be an obstacle to an adequate understanding of Renaissance architecture: “For antiquarian criticism regards detail as the supreme consideration and Renaissance architecture regards it as a secondary and subsequent consideration.”¹²⁵ Scott then explained further the basis of the rejection of the Renaissance tradition in modern times. The poetic enthusiasts of antiquarianism, it seems: “...were repelled from the Renaissance tradition because it was insufficiently remote, insufficiently invested with the glamour of the unknown; because it could be made symbolic of no popular ideas, and because it could not, like the Greek or the

¹²²Ibid., p. 49.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 50-51.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 53.

¹²⁵Ibid. One could probably find those who could write more enthusiastically about the nature of Renaissance ornament than Scott apparently was moved to do.

Gothic, be fitted at once into a ready-made, poetical connection.”¹²⁶ It is at about this spot in Scott’s argument that Lethaby is singled out, in a footnote for special attention. There Scott scores Lethaby’s characterization of the Renaissance as a style of boredom and pointed out how he glamorized by contrast, the Gothic. In the note, Scott continued sarcastically:

For Mr. Lethaby, Renaissance architecture is ‘architect’s architecture,’ architecture that is to say, not convertible, presumably, into terms of poetry, or historical romance, but requiring a knowledge of architectural principles for it’s appreciation. Renaissance architecture, in fact, is here read off [citing Lethaby’s Architecture and giving the publication date as 1912] in terms of Renaissance Society and those who enjoy it as an art are stigmatised as ‘architects.’ When a critic perhaps as learned and eminent as any now writing on the subject of architecture in England, can offer us these censures, even in a popular work, as though they were accepted commonplaces, it is not easy to hope that the Romantic Fallacy is becoming extinct.¹²⁷

Nearer the end of the chapter Scott, after a few more uncomplimentary characterizations, is in more a mood to grant romanticism some due:

The Romantic movement is a phase, precisely, of this literary pre-occupation. It is the most extreme example of the triumph of association over direct experience which the history of culture contains. Its influence on taste can never be quite undone, nor need we wish it. Romanticism, as a conscious force, has brought with it much that is valuable, and holds the imagination of the age with an emphatic and pervasive control.¹²⁸

He suggested that one cannot completely disassociate the values of “romantic” criticism from those of his own: “When we review the sensuous perception of the work of art, in addition to the immediate value this perception may have for us, there will be, surrounding it, an penumbra of ‘literary’ and other values.”¹²⁹

In a second chapter devoted to the Romantic Fallacy, Scott concentrated on “Naturalism” and “The Picturesque.” Romanticism, he observed, is inspired also by “Nature,” but this had its unpleasant effect on landscaping along Renaissance lines and also on architectural form: “...when Nature, through poetry,

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 54.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 54-55.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 57.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 58.

acquired its prestige [in the Eighteenth Century] the formal garden stood condemned. Unpleasing in itself, because ‘unnatural,’ it was in addition a barbarous violence, a ruthless vandalism upon pools and trees...” Also: “...the modern preference is to make the manor share [through conscious “rusticness”] the romantic charm of the cottage.”¹³⁰ Scott conceded again some good effect of literature on the visual arts: “The influence of literature upon the arts of form exists at all times, and is often beneficial. Romanticism is a permanent force in the mind, to be neither segregated nor expelled.”¹³¹ Yet, in specific cases, Ruskin’s for example, literary praises to nature had negative effects for architecture: “...there is little doubt that Ruskin’s reiterated appeal to the example of nature to witness against the formal instincts of man, did far more to enforce the prejudice against the ‘foul torrent of the Renaissance’ than he effected either by detailed reasoning or general abuse.” “Naturalism,” Scott continued, “became the aesthetic method, and the love of Nature, the most genuine emotion of our age...”¹³² On Nature versus Palladianism: “The choice between them was a moral choice between reverence and beauty. This was the refrain of The Stones of Venice and all the criticisms ‘according to nature’.” The “creed of Nature” brought about two consequences: First, a prejudice against Order and Proportion (one could notice for contrast, Lethaby’s skepticism about the value of the latter as an abstract goal, at least)—and therefore against the Renaissance. Second, the emphasis on representation in painting, Scott singled out the “microscopic reality” of the Pre-Raphaelites.”¹³³

The Mechanical Fallacy

The “Mechanical Fallacy” in architecture, Scott related, was in no way allied with the Romantic viewpoint and in a way was a reaction against it. Like the Romantic Fallacy, however, this wrongheadedness had its roots in literature: “...literature became realistic, statistical, and documentary.

¹³⁰Ibid., pp. 60 and 62.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 64.

¹³²Ibid., p. 67.

¹³³The Architecture of Humanism, pp. 68 and 69.

Architecture, founded, as it is, on construction, could be rendered, even more readily than the rest [the other Fine Arts], in the terms of purely scientific description; it almost, moreover, could easily be converted into the ideals of the engineer.”¹³⁴ Regarding the last point in the quote, Lethaby had stressed that many of the traits of the engineer could profitably be emulated by the architectural profession, as well as the reverse, although most of his most concerted expressions of this came, as it happens, in years following Scott’s publication. In discussing the “mechanical fallacy,” Scott stated that it was allied with the Romantic in one important way—in its inevitable prejudice against the architecture of the Renaissance.” Partly, this was because “...the influence of science reinforced the influence of poetry in giving the medieval art a superior prestige.”¹³⁵

Gothic architecture, Scott emphasized, came into being as the result of the invention of “intermittent buttressing.” He thus stressed that the origins of that style should be considered to lie in structural developments. This appealed to those susceptible to the “mechanical fallacy,” and the administration of what was thought to be so essential to the Gothic produced a corresponding negativism about the architecture of the Renaissance: “Thus Gothic, remote, fanciful, and mysterious, was, at the same time, exact, calculated, and mechanical; the triumph of science no less than the incarnation of romance.” The Renaissance on the other hand “...had subordinated, deliberately and without hesitation, constructional fact to aesthetic effect.”¹³⁶ In phrasing the objection another way, Scott quoted from one of the “errant” architectural critics, possibly Lethaby: “Architecture...critics are apt to say, ‘architecture is construction. Its essential characteristic as an art is that it deals, not with mere patterns of light and shade, but with structural laws...’ ” And continued: “ ‘architecture...will be beautiful in which the construction is best and in which it is most truthfully displayed.’ ”¹³⁷ Scott explained how Gothic architecture fits the criteria of the “scientific critic” so comfortably: “...in the Gothic style, every detail confesses a

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 80.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 69.

¹³⁶Ibid., both quotes from p. 81.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 83.

constructive purpose, and delights us by our sense of its fitness for the work which is, just here, precisely required of it.”¹³⁸ His objection to such enthusiasm for these qualities in medieval and also in Greek architecture follows: “Greek and medieval construction...is not pure construction, but construction for an aesthetic, and it is not, strictly speaking, ‘good’ construction for constructively, it is often extremely clumsy and wasteful.”¹³⁹

In effect, Scott reversed Lethaby’s argument that there can be no pure form independent of constructional need and claimed that there was at least in Greek and medieval architecture, no “pure construction” independent of its aesthetic purpose. He suggested that in the Renaissance constructional and artistic attributes of architecture were not melded together and the larger implication is that they need not necessarily be:

...Renaissance architecture had to supply the utilitarian needs of a still more varied and more fastidious life [than that of the Gothic]. Had it remained tied to the idea of so-called constructive sincerity, which means no more than arbitrary insistence that the structural and artistic necessities of architecture would be satisfied by one and the same expedient, its search for structural beauty would have been hampered at every turn.¹⁴⁰

Ethical Fallacy

Scott’s “ethical fallacy” attacked the attitude that the value of architecture can be ascertained by applying certain extrinsic criteria to it. The entire chapter is a thoroughgoing objection to Lethaby’s view. Scott objected to contentions that a particular variant of architecture could ever be found morally bad, or that one approved an architecture because it effectively served the political goals of a society or because it expressed “national” goals. Also, Scott reasoned, why should architecture carry a moral lesson or need to express the humanity of its maker? Why should architecture be judged according to its external effects?

Writing of the unfavorable perception by some of Renaissance architecture, Scott complained: “Barren to the imagination, absurd to the intellect, the poets and professors of construction had declared

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

this architecture to be. It is now repugnant to the conscience and a peril to the soul.” He continued: “In milder language (after Ruskin), certainly, but with even less sense that such ideas require argument or proof, the axioms are re-iterated: architecture is still the ‘distinctively political’ art, its virtue to ‘reflect a national aspiration, and all the faults and merits of a class or nation are seen reflected in the architecture that serves their use’.”¹⁴¹ Renaissance architecture, Scott maintained in another statement, is subject to three criticisms by the “ethical critic:”

First, the now blunted [by 1914] shafts of theology. Renaissance architecture is ‘impious.’ Next a prick to the social conscience: Renaissance architecture entails conditions, and is demanded by desires that are oppressive and unjust, it ‘makes slaves of its workmen and sybarites of its inhabitants...[and last:] Renaissance architecture is bad in itself, inherently because it is insincere (for instance) or ostentatious; because the moral nature of it is corrupt.’¹⁴²

Scott objected to critics seeking in architecture a moral reference: “The styles of architecture come to symbolize those states of human character in the craftsman, the patron or the public which they could be argued to imply. They were praised or blamed in proportion as those states were morally approved.”¹⁴³ Ruskin’s position (and thus Lethaby’s) is acknowledged as Scott commented on the former’s The Seven Lamps of Architecture and The Stones of Venice: “The method of the new criticisms was impressive and amazing” (for instance: the juxtaposition of corresponding details of medieval and Renaissance architecture to demonstrate the superiority of the former).¹⁴⁴ But Scott continued that the ethical fallacy is not particularly modern nor need it be solely associated with the Christian tradition: “The moralistic criticism of the arts is more ancient, more profound, and might be more convincing, than the particular expression which Ruskin gave to it. It is not specifically Christian. It dominates the fourth book of Plato’s

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 98. Scott does not identify here the author he is quoting.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁴⁴The Architecture of Humanism, p. 104.

Republic no less than the gospel of Savonarola.”¹⁴⁵ Ruskin, Scott allowed, “made architecture seem important, as no other critic had succeeded in doing.”¹⁴⁶ But, and one supposes Scott felt the same about Lethaby, “...his psychology was false. No doubt he utterly misinterpreted the motive of the craftsman and dogmatised too easily on the feelings of the spectator.”¹⁴⁷ A few pages later in the chapter on the “ethical fallacy” Scott enlarged on this objection to judging styles of architecture, “not intrinsically, but by their supposed effects:”

The critic is sometimes thinking of the consequences of a work upon a craftsman; sometimes of the ends which the work is set up to serve, and of its consequences upon the public. But in all cases his mind moves straight to the attendant conditions and ultimate results of building in one way rather than in another. The importance of the matter is a social importance; the life of society is thought of as an essentially indivisible whole, and that fragment of it which is the life of architecture cannot—it is suggested—be really good, if it is good at the expense of society; and to a properly sensitive conscience it cannot even be agreeable.¹⁴⁸

Scott observed the subordination of aesthetics in this point of view and linked it to a resulting inability to appreciate Renaissance architecture: “Ethics—of politics—claim, of necessity, precisely the same control over aesthetic value that architecture, in its turn, exercises by right over the subordinate functions of sculpture and the minor arts; and Renaissance architecture is rejected from their schemes.”¹⁴⁹ Somewhat later in the chapter, Scott sarcastically questioned the legitimacy of nineteenth century man’s view of medieval times and of the medieval worker:

If we base one judgment on the Chronicle of Fra Silimbene rather than on the Dream of John Ball, which has the disadvantage of having been dreamt five hundred years later, we shall conclude that the Gothic craftsman was more probably not unlike his successors who over-estimated his own skill, grumbled at his wages, and took things on the whole, as they came.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

Some stress is not untruelly laid upon his 'liberty'; a Gothic capital was, now and then, left to his individual imagination. But how minute, after all is this element, in the whole picture.¹⁵⁰

The contention that the medieval workman peculiarly enjoyed superior circumstance by virtue of having "his toil lightened by religious aspiration" also receives Scott's attention. For the same was true for some Renaissance workmen, wrote Scott, quoting from Ranke's History of the Popes which related the religious enthusiasm among Roman workmen in the Baroque ages and their delight in their work.¹⁵¹

One final variant of the "ethical fallacy is then explained. It concerned those who claim to see "moral flavours" directly in architectural forms. Critics note, said Scott, that "Baroque conceptions [for example] bear with them their own proof that they sprang from a diseased character..."¹⁵² Baroque architecture, in the eyes of its detractors, he says "...often makes no effort to represent anything in particular, or even to commit itself to any definite form."¹⁵³ Further, critics center on the attempt at theatrical, illusory, and in this sense "deceptive" qualities of the Baroque. Scott observed: "...this is an argument of moral tastes. Can we approve a style this saturated with deceit: A style of false façade, false perspectives, false masonry, and false gold?"¹⁵⁴ He offered this defense: "morally—identification of Renaissance 'deceit' is justified. It does not follow on that account that aesthetically it is always equally to be admitted."¹⁵⁵ At the end of the chapter, Scott finished with one more strongly-worded attempt to sever what he saw as current architectural criticism's bond to literature. There is today, he wrote: "...a tradition of criticism constantly unjust, sometimes unctuous, often ignorant; a tradition, never-the-less, of

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁵¹Ibid., pp. 112-113.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 120.

great literary power. Into this channel all the currents of the Romantic Fallacy, all the currents of the Ethical, flow together. It is the Criticism of Sentiment.”¹⁵⁶

The Biological Fallacy

Scott’s chapter on the “Biological Fallacy” did not object so much to Lethaby’s views. The chapter might be more clearly directed against those who more noticeably use biological metaphors in their theorizing about architecture (e.g. Louis Sullivan’s expressions about the “organic” and the association of building forms with those of growing plants) or those who use “evolution,” “decay” and other biological words as instruments to explain the course of architectural history. There is some sense of this in the writing of Lethaby’s contemporary, the art critic Clive Bell, for example. Lethaby did occasionally call for “organic” architecture but this analogy to natural growth is not a dominant theme for him. His view of architectural history did involve the characterization of some periods as good followed by some that are bad but there is not, in his historical explanations, that sense of regular cycles of flourishing and decay that can be found in the accounts of some architectural historians.

In the Epilogue of his book, Scott conceded a destructive rather than a constructive bias in the proportioning of material in his book—confessing that it was intended as an attack on several approaches to architecture that Scott did not find palatable, rather than as an inspired disquisition on what is the correct way to look at architecture. He did indicate, again near the end, his fundamental disagreement with people such as Lethaby concerning the latter’s emphasis on extrinsic factors in architecture and his own belief in the intrinsic ones: “What we feel as ‘beauty’ in architecture is not a matter for logical demonstration. It is experienced, consciously, as a direct and simple intuition, which has its ground in that subconscious region where our physical memories are stored, and depends partly on the greater ease imparted to certain visual and motor impulses.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 185.

Comparison with Other Points of View

Lethaby, though applying the largest part of his energies to thinking and writing about architecture, involved himself with the other visual arts as well. One might then, for comparative purposes, naturally include some general observations about the attitudes of some prominent contemporaries of Lethaby in the area of art criticism. In England, the list could easily include Roger Fry, Clive Bell, and Herbert Read. Roger Fry (1866-1934) shared many concerns with Lethaby. In Fry's early years, at least, one can point to his involvement, like Lethaby, in the Art Workers Guild. Also, reflecting the aspirations of the earlier, Morris group—i.e. achieving close integration of the “designing” intellect with that of actual artistic production—Fry founded the Omega Workshops in 1913. Lasting a little longer than Lethaby's Kenton and Company (1890-1892), this experiment showed that Fry, whose primary interest lay with the fine arts, acknowledged the importance of the crafts as well. It survived the economic pressure brought about by World War I but closed in 1919. Despite these similarities to Lethaby's point of view, when Fry sought after the essences in works of art and thereupon-determined value, form (an intrinsic quality) was all-important. To quote from an earlier study of Fry by this writer: “Fry believed that form (as limited and defined by himself) was not only the primary ingredient in assessing the value of a painting as a work of art, it was the only ingredient. There was no secondary or tertiary role to be played by content. Content was there. He acknowledged it had also its value, but it was not part of the artistic value of the work.”¹⁵⁸ For Fry, artistic value did not rest on any extrinsic considerations involving the work in question: “Fry's approach to art criticism can correctly be regarded as opposite to that of Ruskin in that in the latter there was an emphasis on the interrelationship between the morality of society and the world of art.”¹⁵⁹

A close associate of Fry's was Clive Bell. Bell, like Fry, developed a means of aesthetic evaluation based on formal qualities. Bell's concept, based on what he called “significant form,” was publicly questioned by Lethaby in “What Shall We Call Beautiful?” Here, Lethaby questioned how one could

¹⁵⁸“Art History, Progress and Roger Fry,” May 10, 1973. Howard J. Iber, p. 15. TS (Graduate seminar paper given at Cornell University, Ithaca.) Underlining was not added here.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

determine meaning and value without referring it to the society that produced it. Of what were the forms significant?¹⁶⁰ Solomon Fishman in his 1963 book The Interpretation of Art, offers some observations which help underline the fundamental difference between Bell's approach and that of Lethaby. Commenting especially on Bell's influential book Art (1914), Fishman observed that Bell adapted an extreme position in regard to separating art and life. Bell believed that both the aesthetic emotion underlying a creator's "significant form" and the reaction of the observer were distinct in kind from all other known human emotions—and also unrelated to them.¹⁶¹ Further, Fishman observed, in order to appreciate a work of art Bell believed that no prior knowledge of life is required nor knowledge of ideas nor a repertory of emotions.¹⁶² Bell would exclude from art criticism all elements of art history pertaining to the technological, the sociological, the archeological, the historical, and the biographical.¹⁶³ Symbols, a possible means of linking art to the rest of the world, were intellectual abbreviations which are impossible to integrate into a plastic conception. Therefore, symbols were "dead matter."¹⁶⁴

The tradition of evaluation art solely or largely in terms of intrinsic qualities, of course, did not originate with Fry and Bell and the tradition remains quite alive today as one variant of the methodology of art criticism. Fry and Bell, nevertheless, can be considered among the most representative of this point of view in Lethaby's time, and, as has been pointed out, held quite the opposite viewpoint, generally, from that of Lethaby. A third, somewhat younger English critic, Herbert Read (1893-1968), was heavily influenced by such predecessors as Fry, but started to move in the decade of Lethaby's death toward a recognition of the qualities Lethaby also thought to be important. In 1937 (in Art and Society) Read wrote:

¹⁶⁰“What Shall We...” (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 149.

¹⁶¹Solomon Fishman, The Interpretation of Art, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963, p. 80.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 99.

Though there is no denying the instability of aesthetic judgment, it is possible to maintain that from one point of view the modern taste is essentially right. For it involved a rejection of those purely intellectual standards of art [Fry's method], which as we have seen, have always been inimical to the very existence of art, and is based [instead] on an appreciation of those irrational and intuitive elements which we have now reason to believe to be the essential elements in art.¹⁶⁵

While the preceding quote doesn't speak so directly of extrinsic values in art, it does, as in Lethaby's writing, show an interest in the possibility of "irrational" ingredients in art. Fishman (in the work previously referenced) writes of Read that his achievement was in bringing about "...the synthesis of Ruskin's romantic expressionism and Fry's formalism."¹⁶⁶ Read's theory, Fishman observed, preserved the formalist's awareness of the primacy of form without sacrificing Ruskin's conviction that art is profoundly and intimately connected with human concerns. Read re-affirmed not Ruskin's particular moralistic judgments but Ruskin's (and Lethaby's) underlying view of the social and moral role of art.¹⁶⁷ Read continued the task of Ruskin in examining the interaction of art and human conduct but did not agree with Ruskin except in the broadest areas.¹⁶⁸ Fishman saw Read's shift from the defense of an artist's freedom against the tyranny of a coercive society to an attempt at reformation of society itself.¹⁶⁹ Both the former and the latter types of activity can be noticed in Lethaby's own approach.

Some observations about the point of view of writers on art in other countries during Lethaby's lifetime may also help serve to better appreciate his views in context. The Italian Futurists, for example, emerged in the world of art at a time when Lethaby was achieving some of his greatest recognition as a teacher and writer on architecture and art. The Futurist Manifesto was issued in February, 1909, two years before the appearance of one of Lethaby's most influential work—Architecture. Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) personally brought his views to England, supported there by Wyndham Lewis (leader of the

¹⁶⁵Herbert Reed, Art and Society (1937), pp. 235-236.

¹⁶⁶The Interpretation of Art (1963), p. 150.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 159 and 167.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 183.

Vorticists) and Lethaby could scarcely have been unaware of these radical views, so colorfully proffered. Even in the First Manifesto, Marinetti attacked the Ruskinian outlook: “When, when will you disembarrass yourselves of the lymphatic ideology of that deplorable Ruskin, which I would like to cover with so much ridicule that you would never forget it.”¹⁷⁰ Continuing in his usual “subdued” style Marinetti wrote about Ruskin’s viewpoint: “With its morbid dream of primitive rustic life, with his nostalgia for Homeric cheeses and legendary wool-winders, with his hatred for the machine, steam, electricity, that maniac of antique simplicity is like a man who, after having reached full physical maturity, still wants to sleep in his cradle and feed himself at the breast of his decrepit old nurse in order to recover his thoughtless infancy.”¹⁷¹ One can imagine Lethaby’s reaction to both the content and mode of expression just presented. He did, however, find the ideas of another Italian writer, Benedetto Croce, palatable. In “What Should We Call Beautiful” in 1918, Lethaby refers to Croce’s support for the idea that the appreciation of art is “intuitive” but adds that, if that is the case it must be a very “extended” intuition that must be instructed by both Reason [Rationalism] and Experience [Empiricism].¹⁷²

One encounters similarities to Lethaby’s approach in some German writers as well. There are the links through Muthesius between English Arts and Crafts ideology and that ideology of thinkers associated with the German crafts societies like the Werkbund, but these links to Germany will be discussed in Chapter XIV Here one might point out, rather, the point of view of a particularly prominent, more general writer on art, Wilhelm Worringer and how his viewpoint relates to that of Lethaby. Lethaby’s contemporary tried to explain our appreciation of art by means more associated with psychology than Lethaby himself would have done. Worringer’s concept of the perceiver’s empathetic experience was one of his more notable contributions. In Abstraction and Empathy, Worringer explained: “Since for us the whole of art’s capacity for bestowing happiness is comprised in the possibility it provides us of creating an ideal theatre for our inner experience, in which the forces of our organic

¹⁷⁰Quoted from the First Manifesto as repr. in Tommaso Marinetti—Selected Writings, 1972, (ed. by R.W. Flint).

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²“What Shall We Call Beautiful” (1918), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 160.

vitality, transferred onto the work of art by means of empathy, are able to live themselves out uninhibitedly.”¹⁷³ That explanation, wrote Worringer, was for Western (i.e. European) art, however. What perhaps unites Worringer and Lethaby most importantly is the interest they shared in non-Western art—in recognizing its importance and in realizing that it could not be judged adequately solely by the criteria that had traditionally been applied to Western art. Lethaby’s approach to the appreciation of art included considerations which could be labeled extrinsic as well as those one might identify as intrinsic. Worringer saw the need, in attempting to arrive at a method of appreciating non-Western art, to similarly expand his general approach to criticism from the more narrow, essentially intrinsic approach used by other art critics. Worringer observed in Abstraction and Empathy: “...we must seek to emancipate ourselves from these presumptions of evaluation Western art ...if we wish to do justice to the phenomenon of non-Classical i.e. transcendental art.”¹⁷⁴

Like Lethaby also, Worringer believed that art had to be judged in terms of the culture that produced it—what the intentions of the artist were—and not through some sort of Western-based system for evaluating the skill involved. In Abstraction and Empathy Worringer wrote that the history of art is not the history of ability. Evolution in art was the history of volition: “The stylistic peculiarities of past epochs are therefore, not to be explained by lack of ability, but by a differently directed volition.”¹⁷⁵ He continued on a similar theme later in the book: “What seems to use today a strange and extreme contortion [in non-Classical art] is not the fault of insufficient volition. Its creators could do no otherwise because they willed no otherwise.”¹⁷⁶ Lethaby could probably agree generally with these thoughts but would still have questioned the underlying values of some cultures.

¹⁷³Abstraction and Empathy, originally published 1907, from 1967 ed., transl. by Michael Bullock, p. 132.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.* On the same page Worringer had also remarked: “...we obstinately insist upon appraising the vast mass of factual material in the whole field of art from the narrow angle of vision of our European-Classical conception.”

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 124.

Lethaby was not inclined to the formal construction of an aesthetic system. His American contemporary the aesthetician George Santayana (1863-1952) was. Santayana's book, The Sense of Beauty (first published in 1896) aimed at displaying a complete system. Santayana drew on numerous ideas already commonly accepted but his organization of these was so convincingly done that the work still seems to hold considerable merit today. Santayana's system was, like Lethaby's theory, a very comprehensive one.¹⁷⁷ It included many of the concerns Lethaby thought important. The American did want to clarify however, early in his book, that moral and aesthetic judgments are not the same: "One factor of this distinction is that while aesthetic judgments are mainly positive, that is, perceptions of good, moral judgments are mainly and fundamentally negative, or perceptions of evil."¹⁷⁸ Lethaby seems to have woven moral and aesthetic values more closely together. Like Lethaby, however, Santayana believed that artistic appreciation must involve more than sensual reaction to the physical stimuli of a work:

The ignorant fail to see the forms of music, architecture, and landscape, and therefore are insensible to relative rank and technical values in these spheres; they regard the objects only as so many stimuli to emotion, as soothing or enlivening influences. But the sensuous and associative values of these things...are so great, that even without an appreciation of form [an ability to appreciate its symbolism?] considerable beauty may be found in them.¹⁷⁹

As Jerome Ashmore pointed out in his 1966 study of Santayana, that philosopher, like Lethaby, linked art in a direct way with other human activity. For Santayana, art helps provide for continual improvement in the conditions of human life and could supply happiness.¹⁸⁰ In a section in The Sense of Beauty entitled "Cause as an Element of Effect" Santayana recognized, like Lethaby, how an appreciation of the labor expended on a work of art may affect (Lethaby would say should affect) our appreciation of

¹⁷⁷The perspective of Lethaby's contemporary fellow English critic Roger Fry could be held up in contrast although Fry shared Lethaby's aversion to developing an aesthetic system with a formal structure.

¹⁷⁸George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty, 1955 edition, p. 27.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁸⁰Santayana, Art and Aesthetics (1966), Jerome Ashmore, p. 65. Another American thinker already active at this time, Lewis Mumford, shared this approach also.

the object: “And that on which human labour has been spent, especially if it was a labour of love, and is apparent in the product, has one of the deepest possible claims to admiration.” In the following section, called “the expression of economy and fitness,” Santayana observed that a sense of “cleanliness,” “security,” “comfort” and “economy can all contribute to a perception of beauty. On the last of these qualities: “There are few things more utterly discomfoting to our needs than waste.”¹⁸¹ He added at a later point: “The much-praised expressions of function and truth in architectural works reduces itself to this principle...the recurring observation of the utility, economy, and fitness of the traditional arrangement in buildings or other products of art, re-enforces this formal expectation with a reflective approval.”¹⁸²

Santayana cautioned, however, even before such questions were encouraged decades later by the events at the Bauhaus and by the writings of Le Corbusier, that “utility” not be given the primary place in deliberation as to the beauty an object may possess: “This principle is, indeed not a fundamental, but an auxiliary one, the expression of utility modifies effect, but does not constitute it. There would be a kind of superstitious haste in the notion that what is convenient and economical is necessarily and by miracle beautiful.”¹⁸³ Santayana had remarked earlier in the book, “Sometimes we are told that utility is itself the essence of beauty,” but added that “...the beautiful does not depend on the useful.” Instead, “There are...at a late and derivative stage in our aesthetic judgment... certain cases in which the knowledge of fitness and utility enters into our sense of beauty.” Utility can enter our perception of beauty also by its absence: “The most ordinary way in which utility affects us is negatively; if we know a thing to be useless and fictitious, the uncomfortable haunting sense of waste and trickery prevents all enjoyment, and therefore banishes beauty.” One could, according to Santayana, also turn around the whole issue of the

¹⁸¹The Sense of Beauty, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 212. Santayana had a greater sensitivity to and interest in architectural problems than most philosophers. He wanted to become an architect at one time.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 213.

dependence of beauty upon utility: “Opposed to this utilitarian theory stands the metaphysical one that would make the beauty or intrinsic rightness of things the source of their efficiency...”¹⁸⁴

Santayana provides for the outlook of Ruskin, Morris and Lethaby without conceding that it is the only way to identify beauty in art: “...the doctrine that beauty is essentially nothing but the expression of moral or practical good appeals to persons of predominant moral sensitiveness, not only because they wish it were the truth, but because it largely describes the experience of their own minds, somewhat warped in this particular.” Among the various inclinations of human thought though, Santayana himself seems closer to the “warped” position in conceding the general authority of “morals” over “aesthetics.”¹⁸⁵

Summary

This chapter has sought to discuss how, for Lethaby, works of architecture could be found to have meaning and value. From the perceiver’s standpoint, Lethaby thought certain qualities, like workmanship, should contribute to the overall appreciation. Among qualities that could be categorized as “rational,” Lethaby emphasized some, neglected perhaps others. Down-to-earth attributes like “satisfaction of function” and more esoteric ones such as “nobility” could fall under this heading. But Lethaby also recognized that architecture could contain the “irrational”—elements of mystery, mysticism and wonder—which would also affect the perceiver. This chapter also pointed out Lethaby’s concern for the relationship of the work of art with its maker and the way the two entities acted upon one another. Lastly, the points of view of some of Lethaby’s contemporaries were brought out in an effort to further put Lethaby’s thinking in context. Some viewpoints were noticeably different from Lethaby’s in their approach to the question of the appreciation of art—like those of Scott, Fry, Bell and Marinetti. Others like Read, Worringer and Santayana shared some of Lethaby’s positions or include Lethaby’s approach within the parameters of their own. There was a tendency, on the part of these last named to share with

¹⁸⁴Preceding quotes from the *The Sense of Beauty*, *op.cit.*, pp.155-157.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 214-216.

Lethaby an acknowledgement of the need to consider extrinsic factors in understanding and appreciating a work of art.

In architecture, “style” is an important vehicle for the transmission of information to the perceiver. The next[?] chapter will examine Lethaby’s views on architectural “style”—a topic which generated wide debate in Lethaby’s time and which still remains an important subject in architectural discussions. Lethaby’s influence on English architectural thinking encourages one to want to understand more about his views in more particular areas of concern, and his ideas about style in architecture constitute a valid line of inquiry in this regard.

CHAPTER VII

LETHABY AND ARCHITECTURAL “STYLES”

As one might guess, Lethaby's views on ornament and architectural “styles” are related. When organizing the architectural fabric of geographic areas and historical periods, buildings are often grouped according to the common traits they possess and categorized under the various “styles.” Studying the characteristics that the ornament a building possesses has often been found to be a good way of deciding what “style” the building is. “Style” has other meanings even as limited to architectural activity, than the above references to historical categorization may imply.

Lethaby's essential point about architectural “styles” is that one should not copy past styles in present-day work. One of his cautions about ornament as discussed in the last chapter runs parallel to this (i.e., do not copy past ornament and place it on present-day buildings). Aside from these similarities, a discussion of Lethaby's views on the “styles” involves a differently oriented body of thought than his views on ornament, from which the main impact on architecture came through Lethaby's inclination toward diminishing the amount of ornament or eliminating it altogether. Lethaby gave a significant amount of printed space to the question of the architectural “styles” and he never seems to have tired of including comments about style in a variety of contexts.

This chapter will discuss Lethaby's thoughts on this subject, with the exception of that material relating to ornament, which has been addressed in the preceding chapter. After considering the general attributes of “styles,” as applied to architecture, some discussion of Lethaby's background on the “style” issue will be offered, including influences on his position and some comments on his interests and activities relating to historical architecture. His criticisms and cautions about the utilization of former architectural “styles” in contemporary work will be discussed next, followed by some account of his reservations about ahistorical modern developments insofar as they are concerned with the “style” question. Following a discussion of these negative views, Lethaby's more positive statements, aimed at

improving conditions for current architecture brought on by problems with “style,” will be addressed.

Last, some observations linking Lethaby’s views on style to his own design activities will be made.

Lethaby’s understanding of what constituted a “style” was quite enlightened when compared to that of most architectural practitioners and students of architectural history in his day. “Style” by Lethaby’s meaning is “inclusive” in a sense—including 1) all of the more obvious criteria which might occasion variation in ornament, 2) form and proportion noticed by the “copyists” of his day, and also, 3) some more subtle indications of style many of which Lethaby thought went unrecognized, with unfortunate results, by other architects of his time.

Lethaby believed that no current works of architecture could originate from the point of assuming that one was going to work in a particular “style.” For Lethaby, each past “style” (disregarding the Revivals) was uniquely a product of its own time and no amount of probing could possibly enable an architect to work again in that style. Those past ways of building must remain forever inaccessible, at least in the essentials—those characteristics of a style whose mastery would really be necessary for the recreation of work in that “style.” But the work done by Revivalists, Lethaby said again and again, involved only superficial characteristics of the “copied” style. These architects were completely in error in supposing they were again, for example, Gothic architects, and their work in revival styles could have no meaning for contemporary society. Such activity was irrelevant and wasted time and material. Human resources, Lethaby thought, were misused in the case of associated efforts at Restoration (see Chapter XII); legitimate buildings from past periods were damaged and destroyed in Lethaby’s time through the misguided belief that one could again “be Gothic or Classic.”

Provenance of Lethaby’s Attitude on Styles

A good portion of Lethaby’s viewpoint on what constituted “style” and his attitude toward contemporary work “in the styles” was drawn (as in many other areas) from the ideas of Ruskin, Morris and Webb and, to some extent, the earlier nineteenth century thinkers who influenced them. The

realization that the characteristics of a particular style go beyond particular forms can be credited to

Ruskin, Lethaby acknowledged in 1911, as well as to Victor Hugo and William Morris:

Men of high genius like Victor Hugo, Ruskin and Morris, early perceived the facts, but the men who called themselves practical had to shut their eyes to such disquieting literature. Ruskin, for instance, in his chapter on “The Nature of Gothic” wrote: “Its elements are certain mental tendencies of the builders legibly expressed in it; it is not enough that it has this form if it has not also the power and the life...”¹

In his biography of Phillip Webb (serialized in The Builder, 1925; published posthumously in book form in 1935) Lethaby again juxtaposed Ruskin’s ideas versus the erroneous ways of style copying, giving credit to the earlier Gothic enthusiast, Pugin, perhaps for his legitimate though partisan criticism of work in that architect’s time:

The critical work of Pugin was continued on a higher plane and universalized by Ruskin into a general philosophy of art. Architects now had a theory, but they repudiated it and put their faith in learning about past styles and design for show, instead of in the practice of sound human building for service.²

As indicated in Chapter II, one aspect of Lethaby’s view of the Gothic Revival was that, while copying the architectural forms from the Gothic did not have meaning, the way in which work was approached in that time was ideal and efforts should be made to understand and emulate it. This is a basic ingredient of Arts and Crafts philosophy, and one finds in Lethaby’s sketchbook of 1886 a quote from Morris on this subject: “You see I have got to understand, thoroughly the manner of work in which the art of the middle ages was done and that that is the only manner of work which can turn out popular art.”³

In his 1901 essay on Morris Lethaby drew the lesson that one should not be imitative or “historical” in one’s design work but that trying to achieve similar results to old work (presumably in spirit rather than

¹ Architecture (1911), as repr. in 1955 ed., p. 184.

² Philip Webb (1935), p. 66, orig. publ. serially in 1925.

³ Sketchbook at Barnstaple. Reference in Morris’ writings not given. Entry date: July, 1886.

in form) is desirable.⁴ In his 1925 account of Phillip Webb in The Builder, he quoted Morris' Pre-Raphaelite associate, Burne-Jones, to bring home the message not to copy the past but be "inspired" by it, and also the suggestion that past work should not be considered a pinnacle to reach for:

Burne-Jones said of Morris: "All his life he hated the copying of ancient work as unfair to the old and stupid for the present—only good for inspiration and hope." Morris said of himself: "I cannot think that I ever consciously aimed at any particular style: I by nature turn to romance rather than classicalism and naturally without effort shrink from rhetoric." By "romance" he did not mean the medieval; at a lecture I heard him say "by romantic I mean looking as if something was going on." It was making an effort in the present instead of pretending that something past had been perfect.⁵

The practicing architect in Morris' inner circle, Philip Webb, is given credit for seeing the pitfalls of style-based design and for breaking away from the revivalism of his illustrious employer, G.E. Street:

Street's guiding lights...were the vain hopes of the Gothic Revival, and later Webb decided to leave Street because he saw that modern medievalism was an open contradiction. He resolved to try whether it was not possible to make the buildings of our own day pleasant without pretences of style.⁶

In the 1925 series on Webb, Lethaby repeats what he described as Webb's classification of buildings of his time. Various stylistic groupings are all listed under one of the two (both uncomplimentary categories)—and the "non-natural." Among them are the "medieval style" (Street's Law Courts are given as an example, the "scholastic" (for example, the British Museum) and the "dilettante picturesque" (the "so-called queen Anne style"—all very "art-free" and "run to death by fashion."⁷ Although it would not be so apparent from an examination of Shaw's work, Lethaby apparently felt that Shaw, too, deserved credit for realizing, at least by 1902, the misguided nature of the Gothic Revival and its unsuitability for modern times:

⁴ "Morris as Workmaster" (publ. in 1902), pp. 3 and 16.

⁵ Philip Webb (1935), pp. 120-121, originally published serially in 1925.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. In his earlier series "Modernism and Design," 1921, Part XII: "Architectural Theory and Building Practice", Lethaby observed that Webb viewed nineteenth century Gothicism and Classicism as "mere copying." (p. 750.)

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

We have no proper traditional architecture, for it died away imperceptibly at the beginning of the last century. We are then at a loose end and were thrown back upon the past. Many most intelligent and even brilliant men tried in perfect good faith to revive a style that was dead and extinct—the Gothic style. The revival had an essentially literary and romantic origin. Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford believed he was building a fine Gothic structure. In the latter part of the last century the revival was carried on with enormous vigour and energy, and with something approaching genius. From the date of the exhibition of 1851 until recently we were all intensely Gothic—and intensely wrong. We were trying to revive a style which was quite unsuited to the present day. Since 1880, however, we have been gradually awakening to this fact. After spending millions of pounds we come to the conclusion that it had been to no purpose. The Gothic revival for all practical purposes, is dead, and the tendency of late years has been to return to the English Renaissance. I was trained on the older Gothic lines, I am personally devoted to it, admire it in the abstract, and think it superb; but it is totally unsuited to modern requirements. When it came to building, especially in places like the City, we found it would not answer.⁸

Shaw may have found that the “Gothic” was not suitable in the denser parts of London but he was willing to use other historical “styles,” especially in his later work. Lethaby did not believe in this approach at all. He did share Shaw’s admiration for the Gothic.

When Lethaby first came to London it seems as if he was not totally opposed to the “stylistic” approach in architecture. He apparently could see working in the Gothic Revival tradition then, for he sought employment in William Butterfield’s office. Lethaby must have been aware, notwithstanding his admiration of much of Butterfield’s work, of the latter’s intimate association with the dialectic of Gothic Revival theory and practice, and his connections with the Ecclesiologists. But instead, Lethaby found employment with Norman Shaw, a man much less committed to proselytizing a particular style. Shaw’s eclecticism, more noticeable in the later years of his practice and his lack of attachment to a particular “style,” may have helped convince Lethaby of the superfluous nature of all “style-designing.” He was able to break with Shaw’s propensity to work in a number of “styles” and conclude that one should work in none.

⁸ Ibid.

Lethaby's General Remarks on Style—Early

Lethaby recorded from Emerson in his sketchbook of 1885: “Invention is knowing how to borrow...” Whatever this axiom meant then to Lethaby, in future years it certainly did not mean borrowing forms from past architectural styles. In Leadwork (1893), written only a few years after leaving Shaw’s office, Lethaby made one of the first of number of clear warnings against copying past art and the futility of trying to reproduce it:

... it cannot be too strongly asserted that the forms of past art cannot be copied; that certain things have been done is evidence enough to show that we cannot do them over again. Reproduction is impossible; to attempt it is but to make a poor diagram at the best.⁹

A year earlier, in his essay “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman,” Lethaby had emphasized what he considered to be the moribund nature of revivalist work:

Architects already now begin to realize that calling their work by the name of an historical style is proclaiming it dead, a fact which, as seeming for the most part self-evident, needs no such proclamation. These names are nothing but epitaphs on the tombs of dead architects ...¹⁰

However, not many architects realized these dangers of working in a “style,” and fourteen years later, in a paper read to the International Congress of Architects, Lethaby had to complain similarly: “no reasonable explanation can be given of a great number of the secondary forms with which even our most successful building are covered.”¹¹

Generally, cautionary remarks about style-copying appear frequently in Lethaby’s later works as well. The essays collected in Form in Civilization in 1922, provide evidence of this. In one of these, “Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn From It” (1915), Lethaby complained of a second wave of style-copying distinct from the one whose subsidence he thought he had detected in the

⁹ Leadwork (1893), p. 2.

¹⁰ Essay from Architecture, a Profession or an Art (Ed, T.G. Jackson, 1892), p. 169.

¹¹ “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship” (1906), op.cit., p. 1. (with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.)

1890s: “Then, just as our English Free building arrived, or at least ‘very nearly did,’ there came a timid reaction and the re-emergence of the catalogued ‘styles.’”¹²

Two years later, in “Architecture and Modern Life,” he urged that one should forget about “style names”: “...our hearts are sick of the vain oblations of Style incense to Mumbo Jumbo...”¹³ Style “designing” was irrelevant and a cultural soporific as well: “We have had warnings for the last fifty years that style designing was of vital interest to nobody and that it was one of the elements which was putting us to sleep as a nation...”¹⁴

The same year, in “The Education of the Architect,” he characterized “architectural style” as “grandiose bunkum,” and contributed this uncomplimentary appraisal in “Memorials of the Fallen” in 1919, observing that design in the various modes “are only waxworks in a chamber of horrors.”¹⁵ In his series in The Builder (1918-1919), “A National Architecture,” Lethaby referred to contemporary architects making “blundering imitations” of the work of the ancients, instead of trying to understand how they thought and went about doing things.¹⁶

Among later essays reprinted in Form in Civilization, Lethaby wrote in “House and Furnishing” (1920) that the chief obstruction to better houses was the belief that they should be built in a style—although there is not much argument provided to convince one of the seriousness of this problem. Lethaby did compare the situation with that of automobile construction—their makers did not insist that they look like the stage coaches of other days. To continue building, he wrote, “... in the brass-candlestick style is embecilic play-acting...”¹⁷ In another essay of the same year, also included in Form in Civilization, in “Architecture as Form in Civilization,” Lethaby expressed his disgust with the term

¹² As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 100. Another anti-style passage occurs on p. 101.

¹³ As repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 111 and 115. Orig. publ. in 1917.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 114.

¹⁵ As repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 123 and 64.

¹⁶ Part XI: “Decoration and Ornament,” 13 Dec., 1918, p. 405.

¹⁷ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 36. Originally publ. in the Athenaeum, 21 May, 1920.

“period work.” “We clothe our building in outgrown rags;” modern building must shake off its “withered skins.” The idea of style copying, as a dead language, is brought up as he had earlier in Leadwork: “Architecture is a current speech, it is not an act of classical quotation—as it is as much burdened by its tags of rhetoric as Chinese literature. It has become a dead language.”¹⁸

About the same time as the comments that appeared in Form in Civilization are those found in the series entitled “Modernism and Design” published serially in The Builder in 1921. In a segment, “Function, Finish and Fitness,” Lethaby asserted that “sham ‘Greek’ or ‘Gothic’ is not an intellectual activity,” and in another, “Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture,” he wrote about “the miserable embecilities of ‘Gothic and Classic’ design.” The series also included Lethaby’s belief that one cannot completely understand past works and that, although “archaeology is a form of intellectual activity and thus doubtless good in its way,” it is “not a typical good for builders.” To build a building correctly, he wrote: “...we should hardly go on pretending that we could command bands of rapturous monks and Greek sculptors to do ‘Gothic’ and ‘Classic’ for us...”¹⁹ In addition, in “Modernism and Design,” he observed that one might talk an architect out of designing in “the styles” for some work, but not for ones considered truly important. The following excerpt also includes the idea that the forms of the past are “used up”:

In talking over the question of direct design for service with friends they sometimes allow that for purposes very strictly conditioned like a factory or workman’s dwelling, a building might be made to stand up without shamming Classic or Gothic. “But for anything monumental it would be quite impossible.” How do we design “monumental” now? Usually a competition is thought to be specially appropriate for “the monumental,” and the competitors dress up various adaptations of the wonders of the past—the very forms which have been exhausted in reaching perfection.²⁰

¹⁸ As repr. in Form in... (1922), as presented in text above, pp. 12, 13, 11 and 20. (See pp. 6-7 for another anti-style passage.) See also in an earlier work (also included in Form in..., p. 87, Lethaby’s advice with regard to the study of Sir Christopher Wren’s work, to copy his writing, not the forms he used. (“The Architecture of Adventure,” p. 87. orig. publ. in 1910.)

¹⁹ “Modernism and Design” (op.cit.), various sub-chapters in 1921, pp. 609, 289, 6, 3, 151, respectively.

²⁰ Part II: “Positive data,” 4 Feb., 1921, p. 156.

In the “Modernism and Design” series Lethaby also drew on two French works to reinforce his anti-style position. H. Clouzot, from Les Metiers d’Art, was quoted in reference to avoiding copying and an excerpt from Anatole de Baudot’s L’Architecture, Le Passe : Le Present (1916) was provided regarding not imitating the past.²¹

In the later 1920s, evidence of Lethaby’s continual “word war” on style-copying appeared in his biographical writings about Ernest Gimson and Phillip Webb, and in some of his last articles in The Builder, the 1929 series “Architecture as Structural Geometry” and “Architecture as Engineering.” In Ernest Gimson (1924) Lethaby again warned that ancient architecture cannot be resumed by another [later] culture and the people who design in a style cannot capture the essential spirit of that style.²² The same year, comparing the design of transportation vehicles with architectural design, he warned that students of the latter were getting the wrong idea (i.e., designing in “the styles”) about their profession:

It appears to students that to be a competent architectural designer is to be a master joker in whim-works. I must say that it is as silly to design modern buildings in the styles of school competitions as it would be to design ships and engines in anxiety about massing, composition, lines, proportion and all that.²³

The comment about the false direction of architectural education appears the next year also in his 1925 series on Philip Webb in The Builder (reprinted in book form, posthumously in 1935): “Now...it is taught that architecture is a matter of recombining on paper features learnt from old styles mixed according to taste...” Early in this biography of Webb, Lethaby divided building into two categories: 1) “sound work” and 2) “style design” and stated his rejection of the latter. Later in the work he stated again: “All style-imitation is trivial and futile...the spirit essence of such designs in the styles has nothing whatsoever in common with the natural work of old builders...” A little earlier he had remarked in

²¹ Clouzot’s quote (p. 749) is taken from Les Metiers d’Art, and Baudot’s (pp. 409-410) from ‘Architecture, Le Passe : Le Present’ (1916), on December 2 and April 1, 1921, respectively. (Baudot had died in 1915.)

²² Ernest Gimson (1924), pp. 7-8.

²³ Lethaby’s letter titled “Architecture, Design, Education” sent to the 1924 International Congress on Architectural Education. (Publ. as “Architectural Education in the Future” in the R.I.B.A.J., pp. 73-74; excerpt with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.)

reference to “mistakes” in interpreting Ruskin’s enthusiasm for the Gothic, about the “...puerile imitations, at Exeter and Edinburgh, of Venetian ‘elevations’ as represented in the book illustration.”²⁴

Near the end of the decade and near the end of Lethaby’s life, in “Architecture as Structural Geometry” (The Builder, 1929) copyism was still a problem he attacked: “This lack of living art is a tremendous sociological problem.”²⁵ The same year (and month) in “Architecture as Engineering,” he had written:

The word “style” has been injurious beyond all computation in putting “look” and seeming in the place of being. We cannot now conceive of buildings not in “one of the styles,” and directly [when] some general idea like perfect structure is suggested our minds immediately search around with the enquiry: “What style would no-style be?”²⁶

The article containing the above passage contains another interesting passage on the subject, this time on Gothic, conveyed through one of Lethaby’s puns:

That medieval building has been called the Gothic “style” is indeed a tragedy. It represented one moment in European history, a step in a great process—the Orientalizing of Western art. Modern stuff called by the name is not of its substance, and it would be good if instead of calling it Gothick we would call it Gothin.²⁷

Some undated material offer interesting expressions of Lethaby’s thought on the matter of styles as well. The typescript “Renaissance and Modern” at Barnstaple contains a warning about mistaking outward appearance for essence in architectural styles:

In speaking of the successive phases of historical architecture it is usual and almost inevitable to make use of the word “styles” but this word is unfortunately misdirecting and treacherous. It leads us in a hidden and dangerous manner to think of the essence of architecture as outward appearance rather than inner reality, as a matter of choice, even whim, instead of as law. As well might we speak of differences in the philosophy, politics and literature of the

²⁴ As in the book, Philip Webb (1935), the last four quoted passages, respectively, p. 125, pp. 12-13, p. 120, p. 84.

²⁵ “Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder (1929), 11 Jan., p. 53.

²⁶ “Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder (1929), 8 June, p. 301.

²⁷ Ibid.

changing ages in terms of styles, as [to] try to explain the manifestation of building though in this manner.²⁸

In the same typescript is Lethaby's interesting expression for the process of copying older works, i.e., working in the "style of a 'style'": "...setting up building in the supposed "styles" of past ages is entirely feeble and futile. Such school exercises are not really in the style of the prototypes, but only in the "style" of the style, costly monuments of would-be make-believe, for nobody really believes."²⁹

Errors on the Part of the Architect—General Comments

Lethaby often included in his evaluations of prominent nineteenth century architects, reference to their tendency to work in the styles. Most of them did and this fact was usually a negative element in his consideration of them. Some of the description of these architects will be repeated here. First, a few of his comments about the conduct of architects in regard to this issue bears repeating. In Lethaby's introduction to George Jack's book Woodcarving (1903), Lethaby wrote: "Architects cannot forever go on plastering over with trade copies of ancient artistic thinking and the public must some day realize that it is not mere shapes, but only thoughts which will make reasonable the enormous labour spent on the decoration of buildings. In the same article he called out the need for craftsmen who will not be satisfied with executing copyist work: "On the side of the carver, either in wood or in stone, we want men who will give us their own thought in their own work—as artists, that is—and will not be content to be mere hacks supplying imitations of all styles to order."³⁰

²⁸ "Renaissance and Modern" (p. 4, with Lethaby's Barnstaple papers). In another undated TS with Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple, "Origins," is the similar comment: "Other activities are discussed in terms of fact and substance, but unhappily we speak of "'architecture' in terms of style" (p. 1).

²⁹ Ibid., p. 7. Other miscellaneous undated comments on style-copying include: in the pamphlet About Beauty (1928) his reference to the "Grand Babylon 'styles'" (p. 5), and, in Scripts and Scraps (version 1, R.I.B.A. Library, Aphorism #142: "Modern examples of 'Gothic and Classical Architecture' are erected on erroneous foundations of nonsense—they are whim works in the sham styles." This was also quoted in an article by Mark Fitzroy in The Adelphi, March, 1944, p. 49, and in The Builder (15 Jan., 1932), "The Wit and Wisdom of ...," sub-section entitled "Lethaby and the Moderns," compiled by William Davidson, F.R.I.B.A.

³⁰ George Jack, Woodcarving (1903), p. xii and 111, respectively.

He pointed out in Architecture (1911) the misdirection of Gothic Revival architects and their conceits about being able to “serve up” the architecture of a particular past century as ordered:

It was very natural for the enthusiastic medievalists who first studied our national monuments to suppose that this architecture was a matter of forms, proportions and details, and that if these were observed and absorbed, similar works might be produced out of due time. When disappointment was felt with the result of these attempts it was always proposed to rectify any failing by still closer study. Not the actual form, but clever adaptations of them “in the spirit of the original,” was to form the basis of the new departure. Then it was seen that old work was full of variations which seemed to be accidents, and our contract workmen were carefully instructed in jointing, tooling, and texture, so that their work might appear to have the same old eager master; for still it was thought that if the appearance were taught the essence itself of Gothic must be present.

About 1860 many gifted men seem really to have thought that they were Gothic architects, and that they could supply thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth century buildings at demand.³¹

A number of Lethaby’s appraisals of contemporary prominent architects, based on their stylistic “doings,” are offered in his account of the life of Philip Webb. Concerning Webb’s contemporaries and immediate predecessors: “For the most part these followed of the movement—backward—of attempting to ‘revive the Gothic style of design’ rather than setting down to perfect a science of modern building.” He continued: “In the Middle Ages the ‘architecture’ to which we give the modern name ‘Gothic’ was the customary way in which masons and carpenters did their work.”³² In the same book, Lethaby divided these architects of Webb’s generation and slightly before into A) the “Hards”—exemplified by Butterfield, those who were concerned with “building,” materials” and “experiment” and B) the “Softs”—Sir Gilbert Scott is dubbed the leader—those who concentrated on less productive undertakings—“style,” “prize designing,” “exhibitions” and “competitions.” Of Scott he could not write much on the positive side: “He sought for a Gothic which might be mixed according to the tastes of employers and committees,

³¹ Architecture (1911), as in 1955 ed., pp. 183-184. In one of Lethaby’s later letters to his friend Harry Peach (6 April, 1924), he had occasion to refer to architects’ real or imagined ability to deal at will in the styles; they are referred to here as “style-priests.”

³² As in the book version Philip Webb (1935); both quotes from p. 63.

and became a busy winner of competitions...” and: “It must have seemed so easy in his day to be a Gothic architect, and he should have proved to us that it was impossible.”³³

An appraisal of Street, trained by Scott and trainer of Shaw and Webb among others, could not be left out. Street’s career was too indebted to the Gothic Revival for Lethaby to overlook it, but, although he labeled Street’s work as imitation, he conceded that it was at least individualized imitation: “His designs in the chosen semi-French-Middle-English style [a little sarcasm here on Lethaby’s part] all had an individual character of imitation—Street was always Street.”³⁴

Street was, as Lethaby ambivalently phrased it, “...the really able and self-convinced church architect ‘in the gothic style.’ ” Lethaby described the competition Street worked on for the new cathedral to be built at Lilles, France. It “excited the ecclesiologists of his time because it was the first modern cathedral to be ‘designed’ in the ‘Gothic style,’ which, at this time, they innocently confused with Gothic itself.” Butterfield, leader of the “Hards,” although also a Gothic Revival architect, understood, in Lethaby’s estimation, that Gothic was an “essence and logic”—not a matter of cribbing forms.” Butterfield (and Webb) “...were the leaders of those who built knowing that living architecture must have more in it than imitative style.” As Lethaby must have seen, in Butterfield’s case, that working in the Gothic style did not preclude the appearance of good work. He describes “a remarkable escritoire” by his former master Shaw in the Exhibition of 1862—it was designed in “the high gothic manner and yet it was convenient.”³⁵

Among others Lethaby singled out in the book on Webb, Waterhouse was acknowledged as someone who “knew about medieval art” and “translated” it. Lethaby saw him as a revivalist—one who was an “intelligent eclectic.” His characterization of Waterhouse produced the following peculiar juxtaposition: “...he followed Butterfield to some extent and aimed at a measured medieval modernism.”

³³ Ibid., p. 66-69.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 70-71. Lethaby felt that Street had enough ability to have done much for English architecture if he had not worked in a Revival style (p. 72).

³⁵ Ibid. Quoted passages in this paragraph are, in order, from pp. 11, 20, 11, 74, 74-75.

“Medieval modernism” aside, Waterhouse, more than the others “seems to have known that architecture was primarily building.” Lethaby’s friend John Sedding, who had been in Street’s office at the same time as Shaw, was not caught up in stylistic error: “...one could talk with Sedding from the heart about realities; it was not all rattle of the teeth about correct ‘style,’ ‘fine design’ and ‘successful competition,’” Bodley and Pearson fared less favorably when it came to the style question. On Bodley: “Working in a style was carried by him to its farthest point in perfection. He could do Gothic flavours to a miracle...” Pearson practiced an ‘early style of Gothic’ with great mastery of effects. His ...” ‘early English,’ like Bodley’s ‘Middle Pointed,’ tended to ‘refined detail,’ and his churches are remarkable essays in ‘design.’”³⁶

Comments on the Execution of Revival Styles

A number of Lethaby’s criticisms concerning style are directed at the various revival “styles” rather than at the architects who helped perpetrate them. As early as 1890, in his article “Cast Iron,” he differentiated “real Gothic” from “sham Gothic.”³⁷ Just after the turn of the century, discussing furniture, he complained of the prevalence of “degraded survivals of the days of Dickens’ (mid-nineteenth century pieces).³⁸ In 1911, in *Architecture*, he told of the “mixed efforts” from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries to be Roman, Greek and Gothic and the “ever greater awareness of style thereafter.” He wrote of the sterility of the Roman Revival and bemoaned the current “Renaissance of ‘Professor Cockerell’s Greek.’” The essential idea of all this, he wrote later in the book, was an “attempt to produce architecture by copying old external forms.” “It was not seen,” he continued a bit later, “that as no man, by taking observation, may be a Chinese or an Egyptian artist, so no man might be Plantagenet or

³⁶ Ibid. Quotations in this paragraph are, in order of appearance are from pp.74, 74, 74, 88, 73 and 70.

³⁷ “Cast Iron and its Treatment for Artistic Purpose,” Vol. 38, *Journal of the Society of Arts*, p 853.

³⁸ *The Study and Practice of Artistic Crafts* (1901), p. 14. (Orig. an address to the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, February, 1901.

Edwardian at will.”³⁹ In the essay “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910) his criticism of the current classicizing trends, to “praise things only if they have columns.” In another essay, “Towns to Live In” (1918), there is the complaint against use of non-local material (expressly marble from Italy and granite from Aberdeen) and “chipping and polishing these into the necropolis mode.” In a third writing, “Architecture as Form in Civilisation” (1920) he charged that no one had yet explained (except by Philibert de L’Orme who argued for the Classical) as to the basis for “styles” for use by architects. The nineteenth century “Battle of the Styles,” he continued, existed “within even the arguments of De L’Orme.” In another essay, “What Shall we call Beautiful,” Lethaby wrote that “...an excellent ‘Modern Gothic’ church is worthless.”⁴⁰

Lethaby’s series “Modernism and Design,” published in The Builder near the beginning of the 1920s, records the consistency of his view about various nineteenth and early twentieth century use of “style” in architecture. Looking back on the “Gothic” and “Classic” of the nineteenth century he wrote:

Victorian Gothic, it need scarcely be said, was as purely an imitative affair as the Classic that came before and after it. There was no real change. All that happened was that instead of being told to copy triglyphs and metopes workers were told to copy crockets and cusps. It meant nothing to the men which they did. Both kinds of work, the imitated Gothic or the imitated Greek, had their origin in the same spirit. The book gave the same answer to the one fundamental question that really matters: the question whether art is to be creative or whether it is to be imitative.⁴¹

Mainly attacking resurgent classicizing in 1921, Lethaby lamented the absence of any artistic drive towards the realization of an art truly responsive to its age rather than one which went on imitating the forms legitimately produced in an earlier time:

³⁹ Quotes taken from his book for this paragraph, sequentially from pp. 18, 16, 18, 183, 184, 1955 ed.

⁴⁰ These essays are collected in Form in..., 1922. The page numbers for the quotes, as found in this work are, respectively, pp. 85, 31-32, 12 and 163.

⁴¹ The Builder, “Modernism and Design,” 1921, Section XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” 2 Dec., p. 150. This sense of spurious interchangeability can be noticed much earlier in Walter Crane’s essay “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings” in Art and Life and in the Building and Decoration of Cities (1897) in which an essay by Lethaby also appeared. Crane wrote: “The well-worn pattern book of classic, or Gothic, or Renaissance forms has been freely consulted and constant endeavors have been made to make the old architectural clothes, irrespective of climatic origin and adaptability, fit the collective and complex wants of the modern citizen.” (p. 124). Essays originally delivered as addresses in 1896.

That living interest, that embodiment of the thoughts and emotions of its age, which make of creative art so veritable an expression of life, are no longer even sought for by us from the structures of our day. Who, indeed, could be so foolish as to expect impulses of so vivid a kind to emanate from the academic reiterations of Classic features which are made nowadays to do duty as architecture? We have forgotten that such an interest can attach to the art. Who turns a head to look at the last [most recent] great building flanking a London street? Its unutterable dullness no longer affects us, for we have ceased to entertain the thought that it might be, and should be, anything but what it is, the imitative system has entered into our soul. It has almost, perhaps, destroyed our capacity for understanding a finer and more healthy method of production.⁴²

One wonders in the “Modernism and Design” passages on “Gothic” copying, whether the “target” might have long since disappeared in the wake of the resurgent classicizing trends of the day; Lethaby was, nevertheless, again ready to use his criticism to highlight his disagreement with the way the crafts were being utilized and to point out again how difficult it was to understand the art being copied. In the section on “Planning, Composition and Block Form” (Part X in the “Modernism and Design” series): “In our most correct up-to-date sham-medieval ‘architecture’ we seriously design...accidents, thus making what was the light-hearted joy of the old masters another heavy burden on the executants artists of today.” Using the example of Salisbury Cathedral:

...we look at the “ball-flower” decoration and say: “Early fourteenth-century” and suppose we know all about it, but we do not. It is a piece of fourteenth-century history and mind and belief and energy which found just that form. By fitting our modern names to it—“Gothic”, “Early English”, “Decorated”—we delude ourselves into an easy illusion of understanding.⁴³

A more lively “style” target, Lethaby perceived in 1921, was what he called “English-Renaissance-Eighteenth-Century style or the E.R.–E.C.S.” He disputed the argument as to its appropriateness and if its roots in tradition would hold up, and observed the fickleness and inconsistencies of “style” enthusiasm:

⁴² Ibid. A similar comment in the same series was made a few months earlier in Part IX: “Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture,” 2 Sept., 1921, p. 289): “So it has come about that we build no more vitally real churches and houses but style imitations, hardly more than stage properties of those realities.”

⁴³ Last two quotes from “Modernism and Design,” 1921, Part X: “Planning, Composition and Block Form,” 7 Oct., p. 451 and Part VII: “The Uses of Antiquity,” 1 July, p. 6.

You say “What wonder...that architects have decided on a language of their own, one that is really adaptable to modern requirements, is traditional in the right sense and gives scope to development, namely, the English Renaissance forms of the eighteenth century. This style cannot be called revivalism when the common brick house with the common oblong window is still the greatest demand of the day and the one in which the architect is distinctly and by general consent concerned.” What architects have decided this and how long ago, and do they wish to relinquish other work than houses of the eighteenth century style? I thought that in educational circles there had been at least four very recent “decisions”—for the French atelier “style” (or rather, styles, for there too is anarchy), for the Cockerell “Greek Style”, for the Palladian “style” and for the “Roman Classic Style” (to which I would now add the McKim Mead and White Style). At the same time the ablest large building recently erected in England is supposed to be in the “Byzantine Style”. At the present moment I doubt if many of the ten thousand village crosses are being “designed” in this desired “style”.⁴⁴

He continued, comparing architecture to the more functionally-minded approach employed in ship building, and wondering about the arbitrary nature of architectural styles:

If the particular “style”, E.R.–E.C.S., “cannot be called revivalism,” why seek to revive it? It is there, anyhow, for what it is worth, but so is the seventeenth century and the sixteenth century; and in fact, so is the whole world. Behind every new ship that is built are all the ships that have been drowned in the seas, but the ship builder does not worry about style.⁴⁵

The last part sounds very much like Le Corbusier’s comparisons between architecture and ships, airplanes, etc., in Towards a New Architecture (Vers Une Architecture), published two years later.

Lethaby also doubted that “E.R.–E.C.S.”, defended (by others) mainly as a residential style, would be applicable to other building types even if its use were confined to England. He sought, by reductio ad absurdum to make this point: “Well, then in England only: Are factories and churches, iron-roofs and concrete-bridges and airship stations and the new housing schemes all to be in the English-Renaissance-Eighteenth-Century style?”⁴⁶

From Lethaby’s view, English society was not out of danger of the Gothic Revival by 1925. That year in Westminster Abby Re-Examined there is the passage: “If our present trivial fashion of “design” of

⁴⁴ “Modernism and Design,” 1921, Part XII, p. 749.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

sham “Gothic architecture” is to continue any longer...”⁴⁷ This seems to be sufficiently beyond the time, to use some American examples, of some of the principal twentieth century Collegiate Gothic works of Cram and Ferguson (e.g., Princeton Graduate College, completed 1913) or James Gamble Rogers’ Harkness Quadrangle at Yale (1917)—but directly applicable to Raymond Hood’s gothicizing Chicago Tribune Building (completed that year). Lethaby’s writings on Webb the same year were more retrospective in nature about the styles—referring back to the active days of Morris and Webb and mentioning the “vain hopes” of the Gothic Revival then and Webb’s determination to improve on the situation. When Morris and Webb came to London, he wrote, the Gothic Revival “sometimes appeared to offer promise of regeneration in the arts.” But it was not to be: “...modern medievalism was an open contradiction.”⁴⁸ In a longer passage explaining “stylish” developments in the nineteenth century he hinted at the unfulfilled promise detected as the Gothic Revival threatened to turn into “reasonable building”:

If builders had only been let alone they were coming round to doing rational work again. But they were not to be left alone—it would never have done—the suppliers of whims would have fallen out of employment. One set of men of taste now showed their taste by more correctly copying Greek buildings, while another group showed their taste in imitating the shapes of the great national art which former men of taste had derided. The Gothic whim outlasted the other for a time and (to anticipate) was itself tending to turn into reasonable building; when there was another outbreak of professional style tasters who shouted “Back to Greece” once more, and set to work copying Paris and New York. And so it must be while “architecture” is conceived as “design” and not a building development; as style rather than structure.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Westminster Abbey Re-Examined (1925), pp. 296-297.

⁴⁸ As in 1935 book version: Philip Webb. All three passages just quoted are from pp. 17-18.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65. At least one of the leaders in the second wave of Classicism near the end of the nineteenth century was an acquaintance, perhaps a friend of Lethaby’s—the Dutch-born painter, Lawrence Alma-Tadema. Lethaby records a visit to the artist in a February 23 entry in his 1884 sketchbook. Alma-Tadema filled his paintings with classical architecture which, although carefully researched, had to rely quite a lot on the artist’s imagination. Alma-Tadema, at least in the final decades of the nineteenth century, seems to have been interested, like Lethaby, in the crafts.

A bit later in the text Lethaby referred more noticeably to the embryonic movement towards reasonable building in the late nineteenth century (the development now called the Arts and Crafts Movement, based on Morris' and Ruskins' views), and designated it the third of three methods of design:

During the nineteenth century there were in the main three modes of architectural design. A 'Classic manner,' in continuation of the aristocratic element of the preceding century. A 'Gothic style,' founded on a sentimental regard for the forms of our old national art, but not recognizing that form was not the same as substance. A Positive method, based to some extent on a general theory of art, on materials, and on modern building procedure.⁵⁰

Lethaby's work in his seventies shows unremitting criticism of historic styles. In "Architecture, Nature and Magic" (1956), which appeared serially in The Builder in 1928, one finds again words criticizing "Modern Classicism and Gothic."⁵¹ The next year, in "Architecture as Engineering," the criticism of the usage of the historical "styles" continued. Lethaby asked if they have an ability to endure:

Look back over modern architecture works according to the dissolving views of several enthusiasms: half-timber, cut-and-rubbed brick, and terra-cotta "movements", Gothic Tudor, Byzantine, and Grand-manner "styles." Which of these has any worth or staying power? Perhaps the Roman Cathedral [Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral] at Victoria is exceptional because it has a builder and engineer element.⁵²

In a frustrated tone in the same article he wrote: "...can there be no architecture of general ideas for living men? Are Classical and Gothic in the nature of things or only historical terms? Are they to go on forever?" Recalling his own attempt at resolving the "style" dilemma he continued:

Then, as some relief to my mind, I studied Byzantine building and Arab and other schools, and tried to get some insight regarding origins. Thus I come to see that our designs in "Classic" and "Gothic" were not styles, but whim works and make-believings. It is only an accident that we are not doing sham Egyptian and Indian. After a century of intense study, those who were most gifted in unreality could acquire just the right Tut-ankh-amen "touch" or the Asokan "feeling".⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

⁵¹ See, for example, p. 145, in the 1956 book version of the same title.

⁵² "Architecture as Engineering," Part II, The Builder, 8 Jan., 1929, p. 301.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 300, for the last two quotations.

The last few lines were meant sarcastically but, although there was no revival of antique Indian architecture, in the West at least, Lethaby must have known buildings from the previous century's Egyptian Revival and experienced the architectural reverberations of Howard Carter's discovery of King Tut's tomb. He was forced to say in another article from 1929 ("Architecture as Structural Geometry") that he could then see only three present working theories of design—all related to "style" copying and all of which he disapproved of:

- (1) Let us go on with the sham styles and say as little as possible about any principles...
- (2) Baroque is a blessed-sounding word which is being made much of in Germany and that would be something to copy.
- (3) Watch what is being done in Scandinavia and America and imitate the "style" of their results.

We must have a style to copy...⁵⁴

It is puzzling why Lethaby mentions the Baroque in Germany at this point in time or at least does not add what was surely his displeasure with architecture as developed at the Bauhaus. Lethaby was not only dissatisfied with the continued usage of "historical" styles but also with contemporary efforts to evolve an "ahistorical" approval. This may explain, to some extent, his inclusion of the third point above, especially in regard to Scandinavia. Points (2) and (3) have some implications which will be taken up in Chapter 11 (A National Style and An International Reputation). The third point indicates perhaps Lethaby's dissatisfaction with current attempts at producing "ahistorical" architecture as well as the "historicizing" types so far discussed.

⁵⁴ The Builder, p. 2. Earlier, in Architecture (1911) he outlined a different trio of alternatives with one of them (the first) at least being presented in a positive light and the second more ambiguously. The arts have been acted upon by outside events, he wrote, but possibly with good results:

In the arts there seems to be only three possible courses open to us: 1) that we may be able to determine our way and come to some agreement and thus build up a fully conscious architecture and, 2) there may be some turn in civilization, quick or slow, which by a change of conditions will compel a change in the arts; 3) or there remains the treadmill of style-mongering-successive fashion of little party cries and their enthusiasm, now for imitation Gothic, then for the national Renaissance, and a return to Roman and Gothic once more. (p. 189, 1955 ed.).

Undated typescript material mirrors Lethaby's datable views on the historical "styles" as previously discussed. The typescript "Renaissance and Modern" adds something in his suggestion that the method by which art was developed in the Renaissance was the source of original methodological sin of which he found practitioners of nineteenth century revival styles guilty. Also there is the characterization of the modern Revivals as "Western" reaction to Italian classicism: "It must be understood that 'modern gothic' is only another fashion arrived at in the Renaissance manner. 'Modern Gothic' is a western re-action from the Italian. Sham gothic cathedrals are just as artistically worthless as shops and cinemas in the sham Renaissance style."⁵⁵

Lethaby less often criticized specific buildings of his own time for their "stylistic" failings. Perhaps he felt he could be more effective with blanket damnations than through alienating specific perpetrators through public criticism. In Leadwork he had criticized the "classicism" of the "new" National Gallery in London. Since he must have meant Wilkins' design of 1832-1838, he was criticizing the work of one already departed, since Wilkins died in 1839.⁵⁶ In Architecture Lethaby criticized Tower Bridge in London, the almost-twentieth century bridge (open 1899) which, despite notable technical innovations, was still thoroughly covered with a coating of medieval forms.⁵⁷ In Lethaby's magazine series "Modernism and Design" (1921), reaching back further, he assessed the Palace of Westminster (Barry's

⁵⁵ TS at Barnstaple, pp. 3-4. The typescript Medieval Architecture (n.d.), also with Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple, also contains remarks on the futility of trying to build in modern times in the styles of the past. For example:

We know so much about past schools of art that we have divided what was a fast flowing stream into sections to which the names of 'styles' have been given but the names are ours, and when the works were being done it was thought that each one in turn was the natural way of building. In any of our tours there will be modern buildings in the Classic, Byzantine, Romanesque and Gothic styles, but it is really impossible to get it understood that they are not of the same kind as the ancient building; the very fact that they were designed in a named style is evidence of the difference. (p. 3).

More specifically directed at revived medievalism there is: We approve this and design something like that, until many have deluded themselves into trying to believe that medieval architecture might be built today although it would be as easy to become Egyptian by a similar method. (p. 3, same source).

⁵⁶ Leadwork (1893), p. 35. H.R. Hitchcock, in Architecture: 19th and 20th Centuries was not taken with it either, referring to this "Picturesque-Classical" work ("Greek" without Greek columns) as "the one which ruined his [Wilkins'] reputation." (p. 108, 1971 paperback ed.)

⁵⁷ Architecture (1955 ed.), pp. 193-194. Orig. 1911.

and Pugin's Houses of Parliament) concluding: "...a little less style would have done just as well."⁵⁸ In one of Lethaby's sayings published posthumously in The Builder of 1932, his criticism of "The modern sham-Gothic fittings and glass" at Westminster Abbey is evident. These additions were "even more injurious than the pompous tomb-trophies," being, he said, "more specious and confusing."⁵⁹ Bentley's much later Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster was praised with unusual frequency, least surprisingly so in his introduction to Winifride de L'Hôpital's monograph on the work. Here Lethaby overlooks the designer's "style," saying that Bentley went "beyond" this to achieve noble planning and sound construction.⁶⁰ A letter from Lethaby to Harry Peach in 1924 reveals Lethaby's impressions of the "style-based" architecture of his local residential environment in London:

I have just been out for a short walk into Kensington Gardens and the Art Mansions I passed all have tin chimnies [?] in number and vigor beyond thinking. All over 'Mansards' and 'domes' and 'pediments' are the same with everything else. Fires that are cold, doors that don't shut out wind, ceilings flake crack and fall. It is all a madness and is getting so bad with the furious school teaching about 'architecture' that soon we shall have to get an engineer to show us how to hang a sash or hinge a door. And still they go on with their Schools of Rome and best London frontage, and style palavers!!!⁶¹

Criticism of the So-Called Modern Styles

Lethaby also criticized contemporary work not based on historical associations. Occasionally in his writing, one notices an attack on the 'art styles' as in a lecture of 1901 where (apparently referring to Art Nouveau) he complained of the impossibility of finding "any reasonable and unaffected modern furniture." One of two (both unacceptable) choices in this regard was "the frantic contortions of the so-called 'Art Styles'—a repulsive sort of demi-monde ideal which sickens the trained observer who can

⁵⁸ "Architectural Theory and Building Practice," Section XII, The Builder (1921) p. 750.

⁵⁹ "The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby," Section on "Lethaby and the Arts," The Builder (1932), p. 175.

⁶⁰ Westminster Cathedral and its Architect, 1919, p. vii. As mentioned earlier, De L'Hôpital was Bentley's daughter.

⁶¹ Lethaby to Peach, 26 Dec., 1924. (R.I.B.A. Library).

read what is art.”⁶² Judging by Horace Townsend’s earlier comment in his coverage of an 1893 Art and Crafts exhibit in The Studio, there was no great affinity between work that was thought to be part of the “Arts and Crafts” and that of the “Aesthetic Movement.” Townsend said he rejected how items belonging to the latter category were rejected, adding that the general public tended to mix up the two.⁶³ Lethaby’s distaste for German and Dutch art styles surfaces in a letter to Peach in 1927, although what he is referring to is unclear. Referring to some printed material he has been examining he wrote: “Again deep apologies on the papers. The things frightened me a little—another kind of art design whereas two things only interest me—human muddling workmanship or harsh science. These German and Holland art styles. I hate ‘em.”⁶⁴ In the case of Germany he may have meant elements of the *Jugendstil* which showed up, among other places, at the art colony at Darmstadt. As to Holland, Lethaby may mean some similar direction or perhaps some application in the crafts of the *de Stijl* Movement as in some of Rietveld’s furniture. The Schroder House in Utrecht with its unified furnishings in this mode had appeared by 1924.

“Ye olde modernist style” is another phrase Lethaby used to object to the institutionalization of some (ahistorical) trends in modern designs. In The Builder of 1929 he wrote: “...this ‘modernism’ is regarded as a style, whereas being truly modern would be simply right and reasonable.”⁶⁵ A letter to Peach about the activities of the Design and Industries Association the year before also documents his objection to converting modern building into a codified “style”: “And the jazzery jump the D.I.A. are taking to illustrating as ‘the thing’—my double eye!! Only another kind of design humbug to pass with a shrug. Ye olde modernist ‘style.’ We must have a style to copy. What funny stuff this ‘art’ is!!!”⁶⁶ In a related comment the next year, he wrote to Peach: “It is a pity that the no-style is becoming as style...[and

⁶² The Study and Practice of Artistic Crafts, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

⁶³ “The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at the New Gallery, Oct. 1893,” The Studio, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Lethaby to Peach, June 14, 1927 (R.I.B.A. Library).

⁶⁵ “Architecture as Engineering,” 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

⁶⁶ Lethaby to Peach, Jan. 5, 1928 (R.I.B.A. Library).

later in the letter] Why can't we have reason and sense not this gloomy 'no style' style? Ye olde modernism!"⁶⁷

Although without its well-known designation at the time of Lethaby's death, the International Style is the object of his criticism as well. He seemed to be referring to it obliquely with a tinge of nationalism in 1921 (in his "Modernism and Design" series) and, perhaps referring to developments involving architects such as Gropius, Oud and Le Corbusier, he wrote: "It will be a shame if after a few years we try to copy a change worked out in other countries."⁶⁸ Later in "Architecture as Structural Geometry" (1929) Lethaby objected to "square-boxes" and, referring to Corbusier's "machine to live in" agreed with the concept but not the solution.⁶⁹ Opposition to the forces of "cubism" in the arts can be noticed earlier, although still considerably later than the time of first emergence of this direction in art. In his essay "Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy and Higher Criticism of Art" (1920) he wrote: "We cannot for long have triangles, zig-zags and jazzeries."⁷⁰ The typescript at Barnstaple, "Renaissance and Modern" (no date) shows Lethaby's reservations about the minimalist character of some early twentieth century modern art and about art criticism per se:

Some manners of building denominated 'modernist' are in fact only another kind of style whim. They may indeed be directly archaeological as in aping savage works; more often, however, there is a kind of inverted archaeology, a vain imagination that a thing is modern because it is willed to be brutal and blockish. The truly modern will find itself as an expansion from within. We might as well build cubist ships as cubist houses, the thought of 'cubist,' of 'modernist,' or any style name is an inhibition. This is the difficulty, to get it understood that art expression is from within, not imposed externally. A true architecture is building for a noble form of life. Copying eccentricities from Scandinavia, Germany, and France, and adding stone-age form in sculpture only produces another kind of sham style; it is very different from being modern with a clear and open mind.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Lethaby to Peach, Mar. 6, 1929 (R.I.B.A. Library).

⁶⁸ The Builder, Part XII: "Architectural Theory and Building Practice," p. 751.

⁶⁹ The Builder (February 1, 1929), p. 252.

⁷⁰ Orig. publ. in the Hibbert Journal, as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 175. This reference to "Zig-zags," at least, perhaps comes too early to refer specifically to the use of that device in Art-Deco architectural ornamentation.

⁷¹ "Renaissance and Modern" (n.d.), TS with Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple, pp. 5-6.

While it is clear Lethaby did not approve of the developments in Germany and elsewhere, one wonders whether there is not also nationalist pride coming through—that English architecture should be “home-grown.” The phrase “inverted archeology”—in association with the architectural implications of cubism is used in Lethaby’s “Architecture as Engineering” (1929) in which he also showed concern for defining recent developments in modern building as “styles.” An art of “pure scientific structure” he wrote “...would be an anchorage against a present day eddy of setting up ‘Modernism’ as a style...” “That sort of modernism,” he continued, “attained by piling up square boxes and making it terrible with Easter Island sculpture, is only an inverted archeology.”⁷²

The Positive Uses and Meanings of “Style”

The preceding discussion has centered on Lethaby’s criticism of “historicizing” architecture and contemporary ahistorical developments. The positive side of Lethaby’s thoughts on style are found in his statements on how a knowledge of our architectural past can be useful today and his observations on what should constitute “style” in modern building. Lethaby, as early as 1889, suggested that the study of past arts did have its limits as applied to current practice.⁷³ In Leadwork (1893) he observed that history made the experiences of the past available.⁷⁴ Knowledge of the past, as he wrote later (1921), could help the spirit and provide a sort of cultural “glue” if utilized properly:

Antiquity is for reverence, for race-pride and a sense of folk ancestry. It offers us refreshment of ‘spirit,’ and the old buildings of the land really hold something for the healing of the nation, if we could only understand; but all this ‘style’ chatter just intervenes and makes it all of no effect.⁷⁵

⁷² The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

⁷³ “Of the Motive in Architectural Design,” 1889, A.A. Notes, p. 23.

⁷⁴ Leadwork (1893), p. 2. He went on to say that this did not relieve us of the necessity of having our own experiences.

⁷⁵ “Modernism and Design,” Part VII: “The Uses of Antiquity,” The Builder, 1 July, 1921, p. 7.

But classification of the ‘styles’ Lethaby wrote in 1929: “...was only a way of explaining the past, it is a method of history...Nothing living is a fixed style, life is becoming. The styles are not ways of doing, they are ways of being dead. They are only museum labels.”⁷⁶

Among Lethaby’s sayings and observations collected after his death in Scripts and Scraps there is one denying the existence of “styles.” Lethaby preferred to think of architecture in terms of a language—and the language it speaks really repeats back the human qualities of those who have been involved with it. Unlike its human creator though, he said, it cannot lie:

There are no such things as ‘proportions,’ ‘styles,’ ‘beauties’—that is all sham artistic twaddle; the whole thing is just a language of expression; either so much reasonableness, so much care, knowledge, special contrivance; so much gaiety, innocence, sweetness, homeliness; so much tradition, pathos, old-earthiness and smiling welcomness; so much shyness and humility, and so on and on, or—so much pretence, insolence, affectation, pride, vain glory, etc. etc. It must be so where one can read the language and the language is, I think, the only one that cannot lie.⁷⁷

Lethaby could accept the existence of “style” if not “styles,” if that was thought of as radiating some human quality: “the word ‘style’ like so many of our words means two almost opposite things—a ‘look’ plastered on the outside, or a reality smiling from within. In the latter sense I am all for style.”⁷⁸ No future will arise from an anarchy of “styles,” for there is no method in this and no principles: “It may be said that what we call anarchy, absence of method, may be an aspiration and that the art of the future some day will spring all armed from the chaos of style and forms adopted without criticism. This hope is an illusion...”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ “Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, Part II, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

⁷⁷ Scripts and Scraps (1956), p. 39.

⁷⁸ “Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

⁷⁹ “Violet Le Duc as Teacher,” MS. (no date), p. 2.

Styles are accidents of an environment and a moment, Lethaby wrote in 1911. One must strive after the universal in architecture.⁸⁰ Lethaby thought, that architecture is a product of a particular time and that it responds (and should respond) only to the needs of that time. In “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920) he wrote: “The more we reproduce dead images the more we are unlike them since they responded to the times.” Past architecture is apparently our heritage but cannot be made to do today’s job.⁸¹ A decade later there is the similar point made in his series “Modernism and Design”: “A building must be fit for its time as well as for its purpose.” In a longer passage from the same source:

The day of stone-heavens has passed. What we might properly mean by style answered to the mind of a people at a given moment; it is not shapes which may be copied. For instance, a rich American might erect a bigger Stonehenge outside New York, but it could not be in the Bronze Age Style without Bronze Age astronomy, sacrifices, culture and customs. It should be unnecessary to tell gifted architects...and scholar-clergy and laymen of common sense that the essence of antiquity is being old and not new.⁸²

Tradition has nothing to do with the simulation of antiquity: “Tradition is now following yesterday; living tradition is always of today. Simulations of antiquity breach tradition to bits; true modernism and vital traditionalism are one.”⁸³ Again in Philip Webb, one reads that: “...a study of old art should teach that every manner of building belonged to its own day only.”⁸⁴ Something approaching Zeitgeist is found in Lethaby’s similar comments in the undated typescript “Medieval Art,” with its emphasis on the product of the “folk Mind”:

A cathedral or a cottage was a customary product and was built as naturally as a basket or a bowl. The same kind of art was made in every shop and sold over every counter. This art was the expression of the folk mind: the spirit and the body were inseparable. The difference

⁸⁰ Architecture, as in 1955 ed., p. 179.

⁸¹ “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 12-13.

⁸² “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, Section entitled “The Uses of Antiquity” (1921), pp. 6-7.

⁸³ “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, Part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” 2 Dec., 1921, p. 749.

⁸⁴ Philip Webb (1935), p. 157. First publ. in The Builder, 1925.

between modern ‘designs’ in the ‘Gothic style’ and the real thing, is that one is a whim of fashion, the other was a function of life.⁸⁵

In another undated typescript at Barnstaple, “Ancient City Worship in Architecture,” Lethaby wrote concerning ancient Greece: “Above all, I don’t want to suggest that we should imitate them except in the spirit, by being truly ourselves as they were themselves.”⁸⁶

A similar quality of style, for Lethaby, was the “unconsciousness” of it—architectural works of the right sort grew from within. A little of this is found as early as 1889 (“Of the Motive...”): “...but once seen, we feel there is a common instinct for its enjoyment, and call it ‘art’ a ‘style’—it is this alone which, expressed in building, is Architecture.”⁸⁷ In Medieval Art... (1904) Lethaby wrote that although there is such a thing as style it should be defined as the natural way of doing things.⁸⁸ In 1911, in describing the great “schools” (approximately equivalent to “styles” in this context), he wrote that builders did their work “instinctively.”⁸⁹ And again, a decade later (“Architecture as Form in Civilization,” 1920) he wrote that style should be taken for granted (not thought about), as was the case with naval architecture.⁹⁰ In 1924, the idea that architecture can only express what is inside was highlighted:

Although a great gulf is fixed between the past of architecture and ourselves, all frantic efforts to form any new and ‘original style’ are misguided, and the results seem to me worse than the dead style stuff to which we are accustomed. You cannot make originality, you must find it. True style is not a whim, it is the expression of that which is within.⁹¹

⁸⁵ TS (n.d.), p. 2. (with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.)

⁸⁶ TS, p. 12. (with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.)

⁸⁷ “Of the Motive...,” A.A. Notes (1889), p. 24.

⁸⁸ Medieval Art... (1904), op. cit.

⁸⁹ Architecture, as in 1955 ed., p. 16.

⁹⁰ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 11.

⁹¹ “Architecture, Design, Education,” Lethaby’s letter to the International Congress on Architectural Education, op.cit., p. 74.

In 1929 (“Architecture as Structural Geometry”) in a passage criticizing copying, Lethaby urged the return to a more unconscious “living art.”⁹²

Sometimes Lethaby emphasized “structure’ and “construction” as watchwords to replace the “styles.” In “Architecture and Modern Life” (1917): “The grand riddle ‘Triglyphs or Crockets?’ might be solved by ignoring it and concentrating on structure...”⁹³ In his letter to the Architectural Education Congress of 1924 one finds: “In the place of style dreaming, we must put the idea of structure, life, energy, activity.”⁹⁴ The typescript “Renaissance and Modern” contains a longer explanation of the same notion:

We have to learn to build freely yet fairly, substituting a general idea of order for the so-called ‘orders,’ and structure for style. The idea of structure well understood would carry very far. It is an organic expanding then, much more than what we usually mean by construction, a dull putting together—with the help of an engineer—of compositions in a preconceived ‘style’ ...⁹⁵

The thought is still more or less the same two years before his death as he wrote in The Builder in 1929: “Some day constructive art will take the place of vague mutterings about styles and periods and other decadent modes of thought.”⁹⁶

Science, engineering, and emphasis on efficiency were also all suggested as alternatives to working in the “styles.” A passage from Scraps and Scraps puts forth science as the solution: “I am sure, for myself, that trivial make-believing (sham antiques and ‘Gothic’ churches) too long persisted in must mean decay. I see in stark grim science the only possible alternative to the grimace of make-believers.”⁹⁷

⁹²“Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder, 11 Jan., 1929, p. 53. Another similar passage from Lethaby’s writings quoted in the Times Literary Supplement of April 17, 1953: “Modernism conceived as a style is only inverted archaeology, it will not be real until it is ‘unconscious’...” (page n.a.)

⁹³ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 116.

⁹⁴ “Architecture, Design, Education,” op.cit., p. 74.

⁹⁵ Op.cit., p. 6.

⁹⁶ “Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder, 11 Jan., 1929, p. 53.

⁹⁷ Op.cit. (1956), p. 19.

In Housing and Furnishing (1920), Lethaby singled out style-copying as the cause of an erroneous and unwarranted split between art and science: “A false and confusing opposition between science and art has been seen allowed to arise, and indeed is rather fostered by expert simulators who ‘go in for old-world effects;’ but properly there is no strife between science and art in architecture.”⁹⁸ From the same year, in a review of Langford Warren’s The Foundations of Classical Art, Lethaby maintained that “careful engineering” was better in our day than “conventional sham poetry.”⁹⁹

Functionalism and necessity supplant “styles” in some passages from Architecture (1911). Architecture must grow out of a particular purpose. Later in the book: “...great art like great science is the discovery of necessity...To discover this is to reach to the universal in architecture and to a point of view which looks on all styles as accidents of an environment.” Efficiency also would be a welcome substitute for the styles: “We need neither Greek nor Gothic, but an efficient method, and all our preoccupations about ‘styles’ block the way not only to high utility but to high expression.”¹⁰⁰ Efficiency replaces copyism again in Housing and Furnishing (1920):

...to go on building houses in the cocked-hat and brass-candlestick style is not only rather embeccile [?] play-acting, but it destroys national growth. We have to put an efficiency style in the place of this trivial, sketchy picturesqueness. Even leaving out the style trimmings would be something.¹⁰¹

In other places, workmanship, utility, and concern for materials are advanced as replacements for working in the “styles.” In the pamphlet House Painting and Furnishing Lethaby wrote: “...don’t be misled by all the jargon about suites, and styles, and harmony, and periods, and ‘the correct thing.’ At any

⁹⁸ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 37.

⁹⁹ The Builder, “How Shall We Be Classic,” 21 May, 1920, p. 609.

¹⁰⁰ The preceding three quoted passages are from the 1955 ed., pp. 2, 179 and 98 respectively.

¹⁰¹ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 36. In “The Engineer’s Art,” an article by Lethaby appearing in a publication called Architecture (date not determined by this author) there is a similar emphasis: “...if Charing Cross Bridge is to be rebuilt or improved we might be well advised to ask for a careful work of the most efficient and energetic type of modern structural engineering, without [sic] an overlay of disguise.” (p. 120).

rate don't be 'correct,' or follow any fashion or 'art style' whatever. Judge things individually as to whether they are well made and pleasant, and will really be useful."¹⁰² And in "Modernism and Design":

...what would you yourselves think of playwrights who wrote sham Shakespeares and painters who produced modern Raphaels for Wardour Street galleries?

If you look to the problem and the materials and to excellence of workmanship, the style competition will soon really fade from your mind.¹⁰³

For all the substitutions which could replace "styles," Lethaby could admit to the existence of "a style" if it were developed out of the qualities discussed in the previous pages. Even as there might be a "style," there could even again be "Gothic," by the re-used definition of Arts and Crafts utopianism:

People will then try and find out what the love of God is, and will find out that it is very nice, not a thing to be perfectly resigned to at all, but pleasant work and happy plan and England cleaned and a curiously bright new form of Gothic architecture. I wish I could tell you how dancing and shining, with traceried windows filled with such glass!¹⁰⁴

Lethaby criticized his immediate predecessors for working in styles or at least saw that aspect of their careers in a negative light and also disapproved of the efforts of contemporaries to create "Ye olde Moderne Style" out of cubes. Of architects preceding Lethaby, only Webb was thought of as entirely free from this stigma. Of his own generation, Gimson was one of the few who escaped from the limitations of "designs in style." Lethaby wrote in 1924 that Gimson "early came to see that ancient architecture was an essence and reality, not a 'style' which might be resumed in another kind of society at will by a different kind of people." He praised the simplicity of Gimson's work:

All his work indeed, through being done simply and without any pretence of stylism, became like old work itself. Those who try to design in a style necessarily produce something vastly

¹⁰²Op.cit., p. 3.

¹⁰³Part XII, "Architectural Theory and Building Practice," The Builder, 2 Dec., 1921, p. 749.

¹⁰⁴Scripts and Scraps, op.cit., p. 28.

different from the old for theirs is not like the old work in its essential spirit, but rather a copy of its superficiality.¹⁰⁵

Other Arts and Crafts architects must have similarly deserved praise but Gimson provided the example of producing work stripped to elementary forms yet still possessing a kind of reference to English vernacular building in its overall shape. This work avoided the “cubes” (and flat roofs) of the International Style. Gimson’s “White House” at Leicester and the Bedales School (especially the building used as a large hall) are good examples of Gimson’s accomplishments along the lines Lethaby valued.

Of course other writers, particularly those sympathetic with Lethaby’s thinking, also criticized in working in the styles. As in Lethaby’s case, the phrasing of their criticism would sometimes include the suggestion that some other “quality” or way of doing things might be substituted for working in the “styles.” Lawrence Weaver, similarly to some passages by Lethaby, suggested in 1919 in regard to a small house E. S. Prior had designed in Sussex, for example, that the right use of materials might be the answer: “The materials have been used in a straightforward manner without reference to those infirmities of modern practice which are called ‘style.’” In a further criticism of the limitations of classicism insofar as it involved a tendency toward symmetry and in praise of Prior’s house Weaver wrote: “Above all, its exterior is exactly expressive of its planning... With a symmetrical house it is almost impossible for the elevation to mark in any way the disposition or character of the rooms...”¹⁰⁶ This latter point about the desirability of the exterior expressing the interior is a common plank of modern architectural theory.

Baillie-Scott, in the same work by Weaver, criticized design based on classical precedent for its inability, unlike the “craftsman house,” to do this. The classic house is built from without; the craftsman house is “the natural outcome of internal requirements.”¹⁰⁷ In Lethaby’s own writings, however, although there are references to “inner reality” and architectural works “growing from within,” one does not find a clear articulation of the needs for “outsides” to be like “insides.”

¹⁰⁵Ernest Gimson, His Life and Work (1924), pp. 4 and 9; co-authored with W.A. Powell and E.L. Griggs

¹⁰⁶Small Country Houses of Today (1919), p. 121.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.* M.H. Baillie-Scott’s article: “The Craftsman or Romantic House,” pp. 92-93.

By 1919, one can see even with such a supporter of Lethaby as Weaver, despite his reservations about symmetry, the potency of the returning enthusiasm of an architecture based on classicism, as Weaver put it: “It is far more likely that we shall signify our essential sympathy with Latin culture by developing a national school of design inspired by a classical spirit.”¹⁰⁸

Another passage suggested Weaver’s disenchantment with the implications of a rigorous application of Lethaby’s approach, especially regarding the exclusion of architectural ingredients of a classical provenance:

There will always be difference of opinion as to how far external influences should be allowed to affect English building. The idea that local traditions should be followed is sound in principle, but becomes an unreasonable check on invention and variety if driven too far. Pressed to its logical conclusion, it would exclude all Renaissance motifs, and throw us back on the affected medievalism which possesses, and in due time destroyed, the Gothic revival of the last century.¹⁰⁹

A correspondent to The Builder about this same time provided one of the more lucid objections to Lethaby’s view as to the applicability of classicism to English architecture and, interestingly, suggested that classical elements in architecture should be considered an important part of English tradition:

Professor Lethaby’s outcry against rows of sham antique Ionic columns is typical. It stands for a revolt against the traditional elements that remain in our work, an easy gospel to preach but impossible to carry out... Why should we attempt to cast out all those beautiful motives which give continuity to architecture and ensure its exponents with pride of race? That we know so much about them we must thank Professor Lethaby, who has revealed the mystery of Greek to us time and again, though, having spread the meal, he would deny us our fill.¹¹⁰

Stephen Bayley offered his assessment in 1975 of the effect of the returned popularity of classicism on Lethaby’s position:

¹⁰⁸Ibid., Small Country Houses of Today, Preface to Vol. II by Lawrence Weaver, p. vii..

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 115.

¹¹⁰These comments appeared anonymously in The Builder (11 Feb., 1921), p.185.. A later edition (25 Feb., 1921, p. 250) revealed them to have been written by a Mr. G. Maxwell Aylwin, English architect.

The lead which Lethaby offered to architectural radicals in England was soon taken away after about 1905 by Geoffrey Scott (the author of The Architecture of Humanism) and Albert Richardson, in which Reyner Banham's Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, called a 'classicism revolt' against the then arts and crafts dominated architecture.¹¹¹

Bayley's observation seems valid although one may question the primary role attributed to Scott's writing in the process of classicism's clarion ascendance and its muffling of Arts and Crafts voices. Scott, in The Architecture of Humanism, as Robert MacLeod observed in Style and Society, confirmed a drift towards classicism and the supremacy of "taste."¹¹² Bayley is also probably incorrect in characterizing the "Arts and Crafts" as having dominated architecture in the immediately preceding period.

It seems appropriate, in a discussion of Lethaby's views on the "styles," to include comments on Lethaby's own design work. How does it reflect Lethaby's opinions about "style-based" design? Some of this relationship was revealed in the preceding chapter in the discussion of Lethaby's use of ornament, since this latter component of architectural design is one of the indicators of "style." In Chapter II, also, mention was made of "medieval" elements in particular, in Lethaby's work. The work Lethaby did as independent commissions seems largely, but not entirely, free of referents to architectural styles which were "catalogued" prior to the beginning of Lethaby's practice. Among other priorities, Lethaby stressed the use of local materials and local forms (or regional ones) in architectural works. These and other prescriptions would lead to an essentially astylar architecture, in theory. In fact however, such architecture, having assimilated ingredients, methods, forms, etc. from its local environment, amounted to a kind of vernacular—even though it might show marked reduction in ornament.

Lethaby's designs, especially for the country houses, show the results of the application of these considerations. His work is related to pre-existent English vernacular works and, because the dominant part of that country's principal historic inventory is "medieval," the attributes associated with that particular building tradition are the ones most often encountered, where indeed any at all are found, Lethaby's work. Lethaby's particular enthusiasm for and interest in medieval art may explain, together

¹¹¹"W.R. Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition," R.I.B.A. Journal (Apr., 1975), p. 30.

¹¹²MacLeod, p. 134.

with the practice of drawing on one's surroundings, the kind of "reminders" of the past that do occur in his designs. In earlier competition designs and the work he was involved in at Shaw's office a wider range of referents is noticeable. Of course, the particular way that Lethaby and his Arts and Crafts associates were "astylar" became, in hindsight, an architectural "style" itself.

Medieval components were the most frequently appearing "stylistic" ingredients in Lethaby's designs, even before he was on his own. When he won an architectural prize at the Royal Academy in London in 1881 it was accomplished through a set of drawings that was mostly "Neo-Tudor."¹¹³ The more eclectic approach shows in Lethaby's designs while in Shaw's employ—for example the "Part [?] Francis I chimney-piece he did for the drawing room at Shaw's "Cragside" (1885).¹¹⁴ Another Shaw commission Lethaby worked on, New Scotland Yard (1888), has a fortress-like look with turreted corners related to Scottish Baroque. How much of the design of the building's form was Lethaby's decision is hard to say but since his talent with details was appreciated in Shaw's office, it is possible he dealt with the profusion of Flemish Renaissance ornament indicated on drawings for cornice areas. Lethaby could have been involved in the Flemish, early Cinquecento details in the Morning Room which were part of the 1880s alterations to Shaw's #196 Queen's Gate. Also, during Lethaby's stay at Shaw's, one finds the intricate "Queen Anne" gables of #42 Netherhall Gardens (1887), Hampstead, although more Arts and Crafts-related, Voyseyian "hearts" were found on at least one door.¹¹⁵

Lethaby's admirer and contemporary, the German architect Herman Muthesius, described Lethaby in a passage in Volume I of Das Englische Haus (1908) applauding Lethaby's eschewal of "styles" in his design work. Lethaby's work, Muthesius said, was "in the best sense modern in thought and in sense and

¹¹³Martin (1957), op.cit., p. 46

¹¹⁴Designated thusly by Andrew Saint in Richard Norman Shaw (1976), p. 71.

¹¹⁵This building has been demolished. The observations about this building as well as those about #196 Queen's Gate and New Scotland Yard are taken mainly from a study of Shaw's drawings at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, London. Whether all of the intricacies so delineated were translated into building materials was not determined.

certainly rejecting every Romantic incrustation...”¹¹⁶ While Lethaby would usually omit any specifically historicizing ornament except in church work he did seem fond of a few structural referents to past architecture—especially groin-vaults. The device was used more as ornament than as structure in Lethaby’s work, however, since these vaults were often made of plaster in Lethaby’s work and do not seem to be a compelling structural choice given the size of the spaces so covered. On the ground floor at Avon Tyrell a groin vault covers the square-plan entrance hall and there are two, small vaulted “squares” along the length of the corridor between the spaces designated (on the plans) as the main “hall” and “lobby.” Directly above (on the first floor), there are two more groin vaults provided in the center of a similar corridor although one of them is aligned with the one below. There was also a groin vault at the entrance hall for The Hurst and the device was also used at High Coxlease. In his sole commercial work (Eagle Insurance) there are at least two consecutive vaulted bays in the principal corridor leading to the staircase.

The cruciform plan of Lethaby’s All Saints Church provided a spatial arrangement probably valued by both patron and architect, at least as much for its symbolic associations with past Christian architecture as for its contemporary utility and the pointed-arch cross-section of the church’s nave has its source in past religious architecture of the Gothic style. Also, the noticeably different sizes of the stone in the jambs of the chancel window may reflect a wish by Lethaby to suggest the kind of irregularities which might attend working in the manner of happy (idealized) medieval workmen. Melsetter House adopts traditional devices of Scottish architecture—the crow-stepped gables and harled external wall surfaces. The many local materials also link it to the traditional architecture of the region—pale reddish, locally-quarried sandstone dressing and green-gray Caitness roofing slate. The forms Lethaby (and his colleagues) use in the Liverpool Cathedral Competition clearly refer to the Byzantine tradition. While one might include passages referring to historical styles—especially local variants, and occasionally, as in the Liverpool drawing, make a more obvious gesture—the intent in Lethaby’s work, as in his theory, was to not work in

¹¹⁶Das Englische Haus (1908), op.cit., Vol. I, p. 151; passage translated by this author.

a style. Reporting on the dedication of All Saints, the Ross Gazette no doubt drew on an interview with Lethaby in stating: “The sacred edifice had been dedicated to ‘All Saints’ and in its erection no recognized style of architecture has been adhered to.”¹¹⁷

Many qualities held virtuous in “Modern” architecture link Lethaby’s work with that body of design theory which, as implemented, is now recognized as a “style” itself. These qualities (found in Lethaby’s work), include simplicity, expression of structure and means of construction, and a high proportion of voids to solids in fenestration. This last can be seen in the façade of Lethaby’s Eagle Insurance Building. At All Saints the concrete nave vault is left exposed and its means of accomplishment, the board forms leave their imprints on the surface. Lawrence Weaver, in describing Lethaby’s “The Hurst” in 1905, appreciated the pristine quality Lethaby had provided for the drawing room there: “When one remembers the orgies of pilasters, consoles and shelves which Early Victorian architects dignified with the name mantel-pieces, this single thing strikes the eye with a sense of gratitude.”¹¹⁸

In Lethaby’s allegorical drawing (of uncertain message?) in the R.I.B.A. Collection (titled in the catalogue—“The Destruction of Civilization”) he used Roman orders for the rings of columns ranged in successive tiers, disappearing into a fiery cylindrical incinerator. The colonnades, increasingly larger in diameter in each vertical tier, end at the top in a row of Ionic columns surmounted by Solomonic shafts with Corinthian capitals. Considering Lethaby’s interest in an astylar architecture for his own time and his love of the medieval work of the past, it seems peculiar that he would select a classical architectural vocabulary to symbolize civilization. But perhaps, this drawing is what Lethaby would have liked to see happen to the Classically-inspired historicizing architecture of his own time.

¹¹⁷“Opening of Brockhampton Church,” Ross Gazette, Ross-on Wye (1902), p. 3, column 4. David Martin, drawing on an interview from the 1950s in his thesis on Lethaby from that time quoted a teacher at a local school near Brockhampton (Mrs. A. C. Bould), to a similar end: “I saw and spoke to Mr. Lethaby once and he told me the chief point was ‘as odd a design as possible not conforming to any period or set type,’” (p. 99).

¹¹⁸Weaver (1905), op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 79-81.

This chapter has offered comment on the roots of Lethaby's attitude on "architectural styles," and detailed his complaints against the use of historical styles in contemporary architecture. Also, his concerns about modern architecture being thought of as a "style" were brought up, as were his suggestions about how one should think about "style" in the present and future. Lethaby's views on the "styles" and how these found application in his various professional activities were discussed—for example, through his preservation activities and his tenure as Surveyor to Westminster Abbey. The last section centered on the correspondence (or non-correspondence) to be found between Lethaby's views on the "styles" and his design work. Lethaby's contribution essentially was to caution against the use of the "styles" in present work. As in the preceding chapter, Lethaby's contributions to discussions about the question of "style" centers on his interpretation of the past. In Chapter II it was pointed out that Lethaby recognized in old architecture, the power of symbolism and believed that the architecture of his own time, although based on different criteria to some extent, could have an appropriate symbolic meaning. In the chapter on ornament (Chapter VIII), Lethaby's contribution again hinges on his view of the past. It had a meaning only for its time and place. Ornament from the past should be rejected as inapplicable for his own time.

CHAPTER VIII

ORNAMENT

Beauty is not ornamentation—indeed Beauty often ends where ornament begins...¹

Ornament deals in symbol and says something—to hope for ‘abstract’ beauty devoid of saying something is ‘vain.’²

These two excerpts illustrate the shortcomings of the aphoristic style in which Lethaby conveyed his thoughts on architecture and allied matters. Brevity, while gaining through that quality a certain power of expression, prohibits the presentation of what is, sometimes, a necessarily elaborate explanation of one’s ideas. In Western thought, at least, credibility often needs a certain amount of support from consistency—people will not readily accept the veracity of one’s pronouncements if one also asserts the opposite. The inexactitudes of conventional language seem large enough, though, to sometimes permit the expressions of thoughts which, when juxtaposed, seem antithetic, and yet, taken separately might both be true. This chapter’s beginning quotations represent some measure of genuine inconsistency on Lethaby’s part. The first says that Lethaby is willing to recognize some objects which have no ornament as beautiful. Several years later, going against the general direction of his remarks on the subject, Lethaby suggested in the second quote that there can be no beauty which does not “say something.” Ornament, though it is functioning as symbol is able to accomplish the purpose. By failing to mention other vehicles for “saying something,” either in the quote or elsewhere in the context from which the quote was taken, Lethaby suggested that it may be that ornament is the primary, if not the only means by which a work can “say something.”³ So we have, roughly: 1) Beauty can exist without ornament and 2) Beauty cannot.

Lethaby’s contribution to discussions about ornament probably does not rest on his ability to convince people of its necessity but more in encouraging them to think about the basic characteristics of

¹ “The Place of Art in Education,” The Teacher’s World, 27 Sept., 1916, p.1.

² “Memorials of the Fallen: Service or Sacrifice,” orig. publ. in the Hibbert Journal, July, 1919, repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 64.

³ Lethaby seems to have in mind three-dimensional objects (sculpture, architecture) in both quotes.

ornament. It takes concentration to discuss Lethaby's views on ornament independently from other terms with which it is closely associated. We see from the chapter's opening quotations that it is connected, for Lethaby, with "symbolism" and "beauty," although in the latter case too close an equation would be mistaken.⁴ For the benefit of those confused easily, he had written in 1893 (Leadwork): "[O]rnamment is not art."⁵ One can understand through other comments, that "art," "beauty" and "ornament" could be connected in some way. As applied to architecture, "style" also has relationships with concepts of ornament. In many cases observance of a building's ornament is one of the most convenient, sometimes definitive, means of determining its "style."

In this chapter there will be an attempt to present a selection of Lethaby's thoughts on "ornament," as distinct from issues of "style."⁶ This will include remarks on the difference Lethaby saw between usage of ornament in the past and in his own time (including criticism about present usage), his notable inclination to abstain from or diminish the amount of ornament used, and the emphasis placed on the role of the workman in the process of ornamenting. Following these sub-themes, will be some of Lethaby's other thoughts on ornament and his suggestions as to what should constitute the proper approach to ornamentation. To establish a context, the approaches of other architectural writers and practitioners of Lethaby's time will be commented upon as well. The discussion up to this point will respond to Lethaby's written thoughts, but after this an attempt to discern Lethaby's attitude toward ornament as evidenced in his design work. Evidence of sympathetic (and disparate) attitudes drawn from the works of Lethaby's contemporaries will also be included.

⁴ In Leadwork, Lethaby also explained that purpose was "the true ground of beauty," not ornament. (p. 4).

⁵ Leadwork. p. 146.

⁶ Some of Lethaby's writing more specifically addressing the ornamental aspects of architecture include: "Of the Motive in Architectural Design," A.A. Notes, November, 1889; the "Decoration and Ornament" section of his series "A National Architecture" appearing in The Builder in 1918; "On Housing and Furnishing," Athenaeum (May 21, 1920, and repr. in Form in... (1922); House Painting and Furnishing (pamphlet, 30 Mar., 1920), "Whitewashing" (article in SPAB Annual Report, 1930); "Colouring" (undated MS with Lethaby papers at Barnstaple); and House Painting-Ancient and Modern (pamphlet, n.d.).

Provenance

Lethaby's attitude about ornament, as with many other aspects of his architectural thought, is drawn from the views of Ruskin, Morris and Webb. One notable feature in common is the emphasis on turning more directly to Nature for design inspiration. Lethaby, in 1921 in his series on "Modernism and Design," mentioned Nature as one of the "three main sources of refreshment to draw on" in providing ornament.⁷ He cited some of the historical precedents for this—for example, that the column capitals of the ancient Egyptians derive from the lotus and the palm and the Greek Ionic and Corinthian capital from the acanthus.⁸ In his account of Philip Webb he calls for an approach to decoration "founded directly on a fresh study of nature—flowers, foliage, and living creatures."⁹ Earlier, in "Morris as Workmaster" (1901) he wrote how one should follow Morris' example in, among other things, matters of decorative approach. In regard to pattern, one has to bring into a room "some reminder of the beauty and freshness of nature, some message from the Earth Mother."¹⁰ Morris' well-known wallpaper designs always gave, he added, a direct impression of nature—an impression of "healthy vegetation."¹¹ In Lethaby's Introduction to Christopher Whall's Stained Glass Work (1905), one finds other evidence of his allegiance to Morris and Ruskin. One owes to them, Lethaby wrote, the idea of ornament as an exuberance of fine workmanship.¹² In his work on Webb, he talks of that architect's approach to ornamentation among the various principles of Webb which one should heed.¹³

⁷ Part VI: "Nature and the Sources of Decoration" section (3 June, 1921) of the series "Modernism and Design," The Builder, p. 716.

⁸ Ibid. Lethaby mentioned as well that in ancient Greek ornament the use of palmettes, rosettes, even the egg and dart, is explained as really representative of a row of flower petals.

⁹ As in Philip Webb (1935), p. 135. (Orig. 1925 in The Builder.)

¹⁰ Morris as Workmaster (publ. 1902), p. 9.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 10.

¹² Op.cit.

¹³ As in Philip Webb (1935), p. 102.

Past and Present

In 1889 Lethaby felt that contemporary ornament should retain some connection with the past: "...the best ornament at all times is neither original nor copied: it must recognize tradition, and add something which shall be the tradition of the future."¹⁴ But Lethaby, especially in his later writings, advanced the idea not only that ornament derived from previous times may not be applicable in the present, but also that the idea of ornament itself may be obsolete. In Architecture (1911) he wrote just that—that ornament might not belong to our age but to an earlier one.¹⁵ In an interesting statement mirroring Loos' article ("Ornament and Crime") of 1908, Lethaby wrote in Architecture: "...it is possible that ornamentation which arises in such arts as tattooing, belongs to the infancy of the world, and it may be that it will disappear [Loos would say should] from our architecture as it has from our machinery."¹⁶ In the series in The Builder on "Modernism and Design" (1921) he wrote: "The decorations of the past originated as magic marks and as playful additions of workmanship."¹⁷ Lethaby would say that in his time, the industrialized process made "playful additions" difficult and people were less inclined to place faith in the "magic" of ornament. As he concluded in Architecture, Nature and Magic, the magic of old ornament was gone.¹⁸

Lethaby cautioned that to copy old ornament in new architectural work was not only an exercise in misapplication but also it missed another of ornament's basic characteristics, its explorative quality: "...the old patterns and ornament we copy, were themselves experiments, and the more we copy their

¹⁴ "Of Cast Iron," Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Catalog, p. 52.

¹⁵ Architecture, 1911, as in 1955 ed., p. 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁷ "Nature as the Source of Decoration," Part VI of "Modernism and Design," 3 June, 1921, p. 716.

¹⁸ As in the 1956 repr, p. 144. (This work was orig. publ. serially in The Builder in 1928.) See also, Architecture (1911), p. 188: "The commonplaces of ordinary architectural 'ornamentation' cannot be justified; at their origin these things had a meaning, and most generally patterns were simplified pictures...Ample materials for ornamentation exist which are universal and modern without our calling for more hundreds of miles of 'egg and tongue' or more acres of 'vermiculation.' "

form the less we are like their essence.”¹⁹ Architectural mouldings for example, one could do without quite easily, Lethaby wrote in 1921.²⁰ These were generated in the beginning by a valid artistic impetus which has been lost:

The constructive origins of mouldings such as the cornice and the rounded angle have given opportunities for endless variations and ingenuities which might be all good enough of their kind as long as something, however little realized it might be, of the original propelling force which projected the movement forward remained when this vitality was exhausted, mouldings, however cleverly they were ‘designed,’ became mere ghosts of forms.²¹

Criticisms

“Oh! Ornament, what atrocities are committed in thy name.”²² The flavor of Lethaby’s criticism of contemporary approaches to architectural ornament is quite strong in his 1903 Introduction to George Jack’s book Woodcarving:

Architects cannot forever go on plastering buildings over with trade copies of ancient artistic thinking, and they and the public must someday realise that it is not mere shapes but only thoughts, which will make reasonable the enormous labour spent on the decoration of buildings.²³

Later, in 1918, his complaints revolve around the extensive use of meaningless classical ornament and a general lack of adventurousness: “...our buildings are covered with the dreariest sort of work, of the egg-and-tongue order in sculpture, and in painted decoration ‘four coats of plain white,’ for anything else is too dangerous.”²⁴ The true art of the decorator, he wrote in the pamphlet House Painting, “has been

¹⁹ “Mere Designing,” Part V of “Modernism and Design,” 6 May, 1921, p. 591.

²⁰ “The Mystery of Mouldings,” Part VIII of “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, 5 Aug., 1921, p. 165.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² “The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby,” sayings compiled by Alfred Powell in The Builder, 15 Jan., 1932, p.132.

²³ P. xii.

²⁴ “Decoration and Ornament,” Part XI of the series “A National Architecture,” The Builder, 13 Dec., 1918, p. 405.

banished to such things as canal barges, gipsy vans, ice cream carts, playthings and common pottery.”²⁵

The method used in attaining architectural ornament, he wrote in 1905, was part of the problem as well as was a tendency to look at “design” too superficially:

During the last century most of the arts, save painting and sculpture of an academic kind, were little considered, and there was a tendency to look on ‘design’ as a mere matter of appearance. Such ‘ornamentation’ as there was—was usually obtained by following in a mechanical way a drawing provided by an artist who often knew little of the technical processes involved in production.²⁶

The drawing board approach to the production of ornament was again emphasized in a comment from 1918, along with his recognition of the stultifying effects inherent in attaining approval from groups in work for the public sector:

Flowers of fancy, after they have been drawing-boarded and tee-squared and india-rubbered, and been revised by Mr. Jones [a fictitious character here], are likely to be a little wilted; but it is worse still with any public work where the designs are sat on and sat flat by a whole committee...²⁷

In the 1890s Lethaby complained that some skills, important in architectural decoration were dying out, for example: “Plaster, once the art of the stucco-worker is now barely represented in the ‘three-coat work’ of specification;...”²⁸ In the same decade he criticized the current practice of covering lead objects with stone dust to simulate the latter material.²⁹ He singled out some gate lions at Syon House which had

²⁵ House Painting-Ancient and Modern, p. 5.

²⁶ Lethaby’s Introduction to Christopher Whall’s book Stained Glass Work (1905), pp. xi-xii.

²⁷ “Decoration and Ornament,” Part XI of the series “A National Architecture” publ. in The Builder, 1918, p. 405. A similar passage concerning designs for decorative painters was written in House Painting. He commented there that designs for painters in trade journals were no good--that they were done in lead pencil or ink by people who “know little or nothing about the proper handling of a brush.” (p. 7) Further, “...they [the designs] are not patterns struck off by a painter with a brush, but...are exercises in pencil on paper, which may be worried into paint by enlarging and transferring, and [have] timid feeling of outline.” (p. 7)

²⁸ “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman” in the anthology Architecture, A Profession or an Art? (1892), p. 158.

²⁹ Leadwork, 1893, p. 2.

been painted and sanded to look like stone.³⁰ Besides deception in material, Lethaby voiced his sense of loss that some decorative elements were vanishing along with certain trades. Eighteenth century garden statues disappeared as a result of the “purer tastes” of the nineteenth century.³¹

Later, Lethaby criticized the practice of over-loading relatively small objects with ornament—an inappropriate proportion of ornament, one might say. Street furniture (lampposts) should be made (just) to do the job and not be loaded with repulsive ornament.³² It was wrong to make minor things “furiously ornamental.”³³ Larger things also suffered from a surfeit of ornamentation. London’s new County Hall, designed 1907, (generally received favorably by Lethaby) could be appreciated despite “...the disguising garb and garbage of ‘architectural dressings.’”³⁴

Doing Without Ornament

In several instances Lethaby commented that ornament, as it was then understood, could be dispensed with, and, despite the sociological potency he suggested it possessed in earlier times, he drew on an example to illustrate his point: “...there is a tendency to think that architecture is only decorated or romantic building. But what is a decorated building? A gin-palace at the next corner drips with such

³⁰ Leadwork, 1893, p. 122. Curiously, though, Lethaby was in favor of concealing the natural surface of some stone work. He suggested in 1911 (Architecture) that one should pay heed to the ancient Greeks and give stone a “protective skin” of paint or lime “- without it, it looks quite raw and makes one shiver.” Lethaby is conceivably talking about limestone rather than, say, marble. He liked the idea that ancient Greek columns were plastered and covered with color-washes and other ornamentation. (as per 1955 ed., p. 73.)

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³² “Towns to Live In,” originally publ. in 1918, repr. in Form in..., (1922) p. 25.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³⁴ “The New County Palace and Modern Architecture,” Saturday Review, 29 July, 1922, pp. 171-172. Ralph Knott was the architect responsible for the design.

decoration while the pyramids had none.”³⁵ In another comment on the superfluity of ornament in his day, he wrote of London’s principal shopping street:

...can anyone truly say that there is one decoration in all the length of Oxford Street that would not be more graceful away and forgotten. For the most part these ‘ornaments’ are just thoughtless sacrifices of dull labour or a part of the advertisement function of a facade, the evidence of a desire to look financial and fat and flourishing.³⁶

In 1903, Lethaby had written that “structure” properly expressed could sustain architecture without needing ornament at all.³⁷ He expressed a similar thought almost two decades later: “It is easy, however, to imagine a school of architecture which would depend on the exquisite finish of structure and reject ‘ornament’ altogether...”³⁸ Beauty may be “unadorned.”³⁹

The idea that the wrong kind of ornament is worse than none also runs through Lethaby’s writing. In Leadwork (1893) he wrote that commercially-produced imitative ornamental work was worse than utilitarian [presumably unadorned] objects.⁴⁰ In his later leaflet, House Painting and Furnishing (1920): “Every scrap of ‘ornament’ should clearly justify itself, for if it is only a pretense it will be much less than nothing, for it will have to be subtracted from the account.”⁴¹ Although he did occasionally voice some optimism that the machine could properly serve design aspirations, his attitude is usually Ruskinian in its

³⁵ Architecture (1911), as per 1955 ed., p. 3. Robert Macleod in Style and Society (1971), saw Lethaby’s view as one of proposing the “radical elimination of architectural embellishment” (p. 58). Lethaby’s Eagle Insurance Building, for Macleod, represents the elimination of the old, but not the proposal of new materials, technology, forms—a “polite” denial of specific “historic references” (p. 58). Later Macleod explained that Lethaby objected only to meaningless existing ornament (p. 67).

³⁶ “Decoration and Ornament,” Part XI of the series “A National Architecture,” The Builder, 1918, p. 405.

³⁷ Introduction to Woodcarving, (pp. xii-xiii). The passage reads: “Mere structure will always justify itself, and architects who cannot obtain living ornamentation will do well to fall back on structure well fitted for its purpose, and as finely finished as may be without carvings and other adornments. It would be better still if architects would make the demand for a more intellectual code of ornament than we have been accustomed to for so long.”

³⁸ “The Mystery of Mouldings” Part VIII of “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, 5 Aug., 1921, p. 165. In Lethaby’s sketchbook of December 1884, an early emphasis on structure is found in a definition of architecture recorded there; already ornament is held to be “allowable” but “secondary.”

³⁹ Architecture, 1955 ed., p. 21 and again on p. 188.

⁴⁰ Leadwork, pp. 4-5.

⁴¹ House Painting and Furnishing (1920), p. 1.

antipathy towards the machine. The results of machine-made ornament could only be deceptive and aesthetically unhealthy for us:

Avoid machine ‘ornament,’ it is so cheap that it is often cast over a work to hide its defects and confuse us. This question of sham ornament is the most serious of all, for our putting up with it blunts our perception and dulls our faculties. How would you like a bicycle stuck over with stamped zinc or embossed papier mache?⁴²

Poetry and decoration were linked: “Decoration is of the nature of Poetry, a machine-made poetry is really an unnecessary mistake.”⁴³ Ornament, for Lethaby, at least in his later days, was not necessary:⁴⁴

But how shall we design pattern and ‘ornament’ without being ‘in a style?’ Well, pattern and ornament are not great necessities, and we should be much better off if we had far less of them—they are often minus qualities, and subtracting them would really be an addition to the main sum of the building.⁴⁵

The Importance of the Workman

As with its contribution to “meaning” to architecture generally, the importance of the workman is for Lethaby bound up with and contributing to the success of ornament. In the Introduction to Christopher Whall’s Stained Glasswork Lethaby wrote that ornament was “Rather an exuberance of the workmanship rather than a matter of merely abstract lines.”⁴⁶ “Ornament,” he wrote in 1920, “may be the indication [among other means] of the spirit in which work is done...”⁴⁷ In “Design and Industry” (1915), he had equated “fun of workmanship” with ornamentation.⁴⁸ Macleod, in Style and Society, observed that Lethaby characterized ornamentation as being a satisfaction to the worker, not to society (although not to

⁴² House Painting and Furnishing (1920), p. 3.

⁴³ Scripts and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 39.

⁴⁴ Architecture, 1911, as per 1955 ed., p. 14.

⁴⁵ “Mere Designing,” Part V of “Modernism and Design,” 6 May, 1921, p. 591.

⁴⁶ 1905, pp. xi-xii.

⁴⁷ “Architecture as Form in Civilization,” publ. in 1920, as repr. in Form in.... (1922), p. 8.

⁴⁸ “Design and Industry” (1915), as repr. in Form in...., p. 52.

the exclusion of a benefit Lethaby saw ornament providing society in general).⁴⁹ Ornament, for Lethaby, could not be divorced from workmanship. To do so would result in the creation of ornament which was “unreal” and affected.⁵⁰

In 1918, addressing the relationship of architects with those charged with carrying out the actual ornamentation, Lethaby wrote: “We architects have a great responsibility in calling for work, and it is our duty to demand higher types of skill from our painters and decorations than we do to-day.” For any ornamental work which goes beyond gilding and veneering one must call on the aid of free artists ... Anything beyond such methods...is of the nature of poetry; and poetry supplied by trade firms is irritating and disgusting.” It was “essential that the artist be given his freedom; “only freedom can produce delight...”⁵¹ The admonition to architects to loosen their control over decoration also appears in Lethaby’s 1925 series on Webb—that is, to put all decoration “in the hands of free artists”—any other ornament is “slavery.”⁵² Earlier, he had written that if things were to improve craftsmen must also co-operate and not be “hack-copying to order.”⁵³

Other Comments on the Nature of Ornament and Suggestions for its Improvement

“Ornament,” Lethaby wrote in 1893, “can only justify itself by being beautiful—it has no justification in service.”⁵⁴ The latter part of this view written in the year following Architecture, Mysticism and Myth seems inconsistent with the emphasis he placed in the 1892 work on the various cultural functionings of ornament through the ages. Perhaps if one sees “service” solely from a utilitarian view the discrepancy is less noticeable. Proper ornament, he wrote about a decade later (1905), was in

⁴⁹ 1971, p. 60.

⁵⁰ Intro. to Whall’s Stained Glasswork.

⁵¹ These quote excerpts from “Decoration of Ornament,” Part XI of “A National Architecture,” The Builder (1918) pp. 405 and 406.

⁵² Series on Webb in 1925 in The Builder, as repr. as the book Philip Webb in 1935, p. 142.

⁵³ Introduction to Woodcarving, by George Jack.

⁵⁴ Leadwork (1893), p. 5.

fact, a “language addressed to the eye—a pleasant thought expressed in the speech of the tool.”⁵⁵ Two years earlier he called for “a more intellectual ‘code’ of ornament than we have had so far.”⁵⁶ Besides this notion of ornament as a language and its obligation to be beautiful, ornament, Lethaby wrote in 1918, should perhaps entertain: “The primary necessity, one might think, in regard to decorations, would be that they should be amusing and not further weariness and terrors added to life.”⁵⁷ Ornament also, Lethaby said in Architecture (1911), should be instructive and use the forms of nature⁵⁸ In Philip Webb again, stress was laid on achieving a kind of decoration founded directly on “fresh” nature study.⁵⁹

“Good ornament,” Lethaby wrote in 1911, “could take the form of stories in paint and sculpture [as well as] uses of precious materials, changes of color, platings and frets of lines, and forms simplified from Nature.” The copying of classical details was definitely out.⁶⁰ In 1918, Lethaby advanced similar ideas with the addition that ornament served the function of a final refinement of the architectural work: “True decoration may be conceived as appropriate finish, and the application of finer materials than the body of the work; or, on a higher plane, it is the addition of thought-suggesting material—a story, poetry or something didactic.”⁶¹ There was however, a problem of themes. Society tended to exclude, to Lethaby’s mind, a variety of worthy kinds of topics. Religious themes were ruled out, apart from use for churches and he observed ironically, seemingly in church as well. Heraldry “was shut up in the peerage.” Inscriptions were too much like graffiti and associated with public houses; “Flowers only just escape being ‘botany,’ and animals and birds would be ‘funny.’ ” “It is,” he wrote, “as impossible to decorate

⁵⁵ Introduction to Whall’s Stained Glasswork (1905).

⁵⁶ Introduction to Jack’s Woodcarving.

⁵⁷ “Decoration and Ornament,” Part XI of “A National Architecture,” The Builder (1918), p. 405.

⁵⁸ Architecture, as in 1955 ed., p. 21.

⁵⁹ Philip Webb, 1935 book ed., p. 15. (Orig. 1928, in The Builder).

⁶⁰ Architecture, as in 1955 ed., p. 188.

⁶¹ “Decoration and Ornament,” Part XI of “A National Architecture,” The Builder, (1918) p. 405.

without subjects as it is to build without bricks, and if we would begin, somebody must risk a smile.”⁶²

Small ornament, like the large structures which host them must also respect the material of which they are made.⁶³ Concerning the aesthetic level of our public environment, he wrote that it could be improved with the realistic depiction of contemporary scenes: “At the Empire Exhibition there were views of cities, harbours, and ships; which showed how our schools and public buildings might be decorated with vital modern art and a reasonable expense.”⁶⁴ A similar idea is put forth in “A National Architecture” (1918), where Lethaby wrote that scene painting, existing still as a craft in the theatre, would make an excellent basis for decorative painting: “...how fine a civilized railway station might be in London with such views of towns and scenery.” Advertising posters also were a source of good design and these could conceivably be transcribed into larger exterior mosaics. Cartoons from Punch, the English humor magazine, might serve as good sources for large decorations.⁶⁵ Mainland Europe held some traditional examples worthy of emulation also: “We may still see on the Continent, especially in Switzerland and Germany, most delightful and masterly decorations carried all over the exterior surface of a house...”⁶⁶ What is important here is not that Lethaby harbored any radical ideas for what could constitute public decoration but rather his insistence on the need to have more than was currently being provided.

To improve the quality of ornament, the training of those who would do the ornamenting should be re-examined. Even, Lethaby suggested, conventional art schools should train some students to be able to do “reasonable house decoration(s).” “The house painters themselves,” he wrote, “seem very helpless—

⁶² Last three quoted excerpts from “Decoration and Ornament,” Part XI of “A National Architecture,” The Builder (1918), pp. 405-406. Lethaby cited favorably the historical example of the Earl of Northumberland (16th century) who had had a long series of proverbs and poetic inscriptions written on the ceilings and walls of his castle.

⁶³ “Function, Finish of Fitness” sub-section of “Modernism and Design,” 4 Nov., 1921, p. 609.

⁶⁴ House Painting, p. 6. Lethaby’s idea of “modern” art had to do more with the recent vintage of the subject than with the acceptance of any of the movements towards abstraction blossoming in his time.

⁶⁵ Last three quoted excerpts from “Decoration and Ornament,” Part XI of “A National Architecture,” The Builder (1918), p. 405.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7. Munich and German towns on the Rhine were especially singled out.

poor things.”⁶⁷ If Lethaby himself directed a school of painters and decorators (as in effect he did as Principal of the London Central School), they should be able to master the following fundamentals (put into list form by this author):

- 1) Cover a space with scrolls, one growing from another,
- 2) Paint “sprigs” as well as the old painters of Dutch tiles could,
- 3) Paint flowers and leaves, using only two or three brush strokes to make a good approximation,
- 4) “Counterchange” color,
- 5) Perfectly write Roman Capitals,
- 6) Master marbling and graining.⁶⁸

This list seems peculiarly specific and perhaps incomplete. His “ABCs” for painted decoration stressed some more abstract goals such as boldness, spontaneity, and restraint from unseemly originality. Work should:

- A) Be “boldly done with characteristic brush strokes,”
- B) “Be linked to traditional work, so that it will seem natural and not a straining after strangeness,”
- C) “seem spontaneous, easy and lively, and often it should be inspired [of course] by some fresh idea taken from nature.”⁶⁹

Lethaby’s advice on interior decoration, offered in Housing and Furnishing (1920), permitted “graining”—acceptable if frankly ornamental and not imitative. Gay colours should be used—not brown or purple (a “mourning” color). One should beware of extremes. If wall paper was used, it should have an “all-over pattern” (as with Morris’ or Voysey’s designs) and not be designed in “bunches.”⁷⁰

The crafts of marbling and graining are given particular attention in 1920 in House Painting: “In these arts many modern craftsmen are remarkably skillful, but unfortunately this skill does not coincide with an important need. For good reasons graining and marbling as practiced have fallen out of repute.”

⁶⁷ House Painting and Furnishing (1920), p. 3.

⁶⁸ House Painting-Ancient and Modern, p. 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Housing and Furnishing (1920). Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 45.

He cites the character of contemporary usage of ornament to explain why, although the techniques encompass some real skill, they are looked upon negatively:

today...marbling is restricted to the wood-cut pillars on each side of the public-house door, and graining is demanded only in very second-rate houses. Two reasons may be given for the small appreciation of these arts. It is supposed to be done as a sham, and this perhaps done in rather a tricky way. However, much of this work is extremely able...

He suggested that if, in marbling and graining, one could “turn the aim from illusive imitation to that of handling a general notion of breaking up colour by varigating surfaces and veining, the objectionable elements in these would then be avoided.” As an example of this preferred approach he cited the treatment of the walls of the sculpture galleries in Munich which he found quite beautiful—the marbling being used as a “means of getting satisfactory broken color...”⁷¹

Color

Color usage was another topic, within the language of “ornament,” to which Lethaby gave some attention. From his 1901 essay, “Morris as Workmaster” one learned it was desirable to use bright colors. The color in Morris’ own work, of course, was an excellent model. By Lethaby’s account Morris’ was fair, pure, simple, and “effortlessly right”—nothing acid, mawkish, or morbid. One of the practical points of Morris’ teaching, he mentioned, was that harmony was desirable, but not through reduction to drabness. “Colour is colour, and not its negative, and to learn the possibilities of delicate gradation it is necessary to have explored the possibilities of colours at their central brightness.”⁷²

In House Painting—Ancient and Modern (n.d.), Lethaby cautioned against hues with fashionable names while promoting the “non-colors” white, black and grey:

⁷¹ House Painting-Ancient and Modern, pp. 3 and 4.

⁷² See “Morris as Workmaster,” 1901, pp. 10 and 22, for references made in this paragraph. This lesson was repr. in House Painting-Ancient and Modern: “Generally fairness and brightness should be aimed at. The sombre may be right enough once in a while, but it must be remembered that the essence of colouring is colour. Too much anxiety about harmony is likely to end in the dull drab of palette scraping.” (p. 6)

You may take it for granted as a beginning that all the mixed colours which have arty names are likely to be affected and bad; avoid ‘chocolate,’ ‘cinnamon,’ ‘terracotta,’ ‘salmon pink,’ ‘pea green,’ ‘peacock blue,’ all these seem to me various forms of colour sickness. Stick as far as may be to umbers, ochres, chromes, with some simple reds, blues, and greens. Black, white and grey are full of virtues. Enormous as has been the change of view in regard to the use of white within the last twenty years we don’t yet use it nearly enough. It is absurd to make a room a filthy brown from the beginning, so that it shan’t show dirt. White all over is often the best policy, for white will refine as far as possible the most commonplace forms and coarsest detail.⁷³

Advice was also offered on the proper colouring approach to painting metal:

A horrible cast iron balustrade which looks swollen and disgusting in the favourite Indian red, may be almost pleasant in white. This brings me to the point that large constructive iron work should nearly always be painted grey, this is almost the universal custom on the Continent, it is a retiring of colour which mitigates as far as may be the harshness of girders and stanchions. The next best colour for constructive ironwork is probably a paleish and yet hard green, the colour by some good chance is caught exactly in the new Victoria Station in London. Modern shiny metallic paints are good for lamp posts and such things. In Switzerland I have seen a grey just leaning to a bronzy brown, which seems to me admirable.⁷⁴

Exactly why some colours used on metal affect Lethaby favorably and some unfavorably, he did not say.

An interesting, and perhaps precocious remark, can be found in his 1890 article “Cast Iron.” Here he came out in favor of letting iron rust but conceded that it was impractical (since of course he did not know of future developments with such products as in Cor-ten steel). Since painting was necessary for iron he added that there were “appropriate” colours for iron—without, however, describing these.⁷⁵ Also, Lethaby paid a rare compliment to one now ubiquitous “machine:”

Quite frequently, too, one sees motor cars which are excellent in colour, indeed, I don’t understand how it is that this kind of painting is usually both fearless and quiet, just what it should be. I think it must be because it is left to the tradition of the trade, which has never been made unsure and self-conscious by architects and other men who say that they have taste.⁷⁶

⁷³ House Painting-Ancient and Modern, p. 1-2.

⁷⁴ House Painting-Ancient and Modern, p. 2.

⁷⁵ “Cast Iron,” Journal of the Society of Arts, (1890). Quotes in this paragraph from pp. 280-281.

⁷⁶ House Painting-Ancient and Modern, p. 2.

In House Painting, Lethaby offered specific color descriptions for garden doors and neighborhood mail-boxes as well as general advice for room interiors:

For garden doors and such things common Brunswick green will do. Post Office red seems to be excellent for pillar boxes, and I have seen the woodwork of rooms painted in quite bright cherry red with great success. Black is most useful, it is clear and sharp, quite different from the horrors of frowsy browns. Usually the safest colours for rooms are white, cream, and green, from very light green to black mixed with umber and chrome.⁷⁷

The painter James Whistler is described as one of the masters of ornamental room painting but Lethaby believed this talent to be rare: “In the old days I have seen exquisite fancies in room painting, with arrangements of lemon yellow and mauve or grey, by Whistler, but it would be impossible for ordinary colourists to make such attempts tolerable.”⁷⁸ Lethaby was attracted to sharp juxtapositions of color and cited examples of its effective on the Continent:

The alternate use of two colours, such as white and red or white and black, or green and black, is a method we [in England] seldom try. It is a favorite plan in Germany, where we often find barrier or telegraph poles smartly painted in short lengths of black or red and white. Sentry boxes are also painted with chevrons of the royal colours, yellow and black alternately. In Holland window shutters are frequently painted in two colours, divided by diagonal lines and so on.

Tending a bit toward the more adventurous (and improbable) schemes, Lethaby included a suggestion for a “poultresque” color scheme:

Two colours may also be combined in stripes, zig-zags, spotting and other ways. The woodwork of a room might be very pretty if painted of the right fair blue, spotted with a very

⁷⁷ Ibid. This passage seems to contrast with preceding passages quoted from this writing in which Lethaby pans fancy-name colors.

⁷⁸ Ibid. He described Whistler’s famous Peacock Room a little later on: “...covered with simple patterns made up from the small feathers painted in blue on a gold ground. The whole scheme of this room was very splendid; the window shutters being closed the interior surfaces were gilded...” (p. 3).

dark green like a robin's egg. Morris once expressed a desire to paint a room like a speckled hen, and lovely it would have been.⁷⁹

Attitudes of Others Toward Ornament (Similarities and Differences)—Comparison with an Important Predecessor

To better clarify Lethaby's ideas about ornament, some comments about the views of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors may be helpful. Lethaby's mentors, the generators and leaders of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, Ruskin, Morris and Webb had opinions on ornament very similar to his own. Some departures were made by Lethaby, for example those related to his changing attitude towards the machine (to be discussed in a later chapter). However, rather than attempting to describe those, for the most part, subtle differences in point of view that exist between Lethaby and his teachers on the issue, it will be more useful to compare Lethaby's views on ornament with those of an earlier person of great influence in English ornament, Owen Jones (1806-1889). Jones, like Lethaby an architect, wrote one of the most influential mid-nineteenth century disquisitions on the subject, The Grammar of Ornament. This work, first published in 1856, was extensively illustrated. In fact, the text is subservient to the illustrations. The work apparently contained enough nurturing ideas to grant it a long life and widespread influence. In the United States, Sullivan and Wright were interested in it by the 1880s at the latest. It was republished in 1928 as well, and probably not even then only for its interest to historians. Jones' ideas in The Grammar show similarities to Lethaby's, with some notable exceptions. It followed soon after Ruskin's most important writing on architecture and that influence can be noticed in the work.

Among similarities to Lethaby's position (one might say precedents), Jones stated on the Preface to Grammar that the book was not written with the intention of encouraging borrowing from the past. Like Lethaby, Jones mentioned the need to retain links with the past in the contemporary production of ornament. The emphasis on the role of Nature seems very much like Ruskin: "...the future progress of

⁷⁹ Last two quotes also from House Painting-Ancient and Modern, p. 2 and 3. Regarding the first, see also some of Lethaby's fireplace designs.

Ornamental Art may be best secured by engrafting on the experience of the past the knowledge we may obtain by a return to Nature for fresh inspiration.⁸⁰ The importance of Nature in the creation of ornament is stressed at other points in Jones' book with the accompanying caution that literal copying from Nature should be avoided:

...in the best periods of art all ornament was rather based upon observation of the principles which regulate the arrangement of form in nature, than on an attempt to imitate the absolute forms of those works; and that whenever this limit was exceeded in any art, it was one of the strongest symptoms of decline: true art consisting in idealising, and not copying the forms of nature.⁸¹

Another similarity to Lethaby's view was Jones' belief that we should obtain some sense of or awareness of the creator when appreciating the created object: "...what we seek in every work of Art, whether it be humble or pretentious, is the evidence of mind,--the evidence of that desire to create..."⁸²

In discussing ornament produced by past civilizations and various regions of the world, Jones pointed out lessons to be learned from their study. From his comments on the ornament of the ancient Greeks, we are made aware of Jones' emphasis on the value of ornament as symbol, an interest shared by Lethaby. The integration of the ornament with the object to be ornamented was also stressed; this also was a concern of Lethaby's. Jones did not find these qualities in ancient Greek ornament, although he did in ancient Egyptian:

Greek ornament was wanting, however, in one of the great charms which should always accompany ornament,--viz. Symbolism. It was meaningless, purely decorative, never representative, and can hardly be said to be constructive; for the various members of a Greek monument rather present surfaces exquisitely designed to receive ornament, which they did, at first, painted, and in later times both carved and painted. The ornament was not part of the construction, as with the Egyptian: it could be removed and the structure remained unchanged. On the Corinthian capital the ornament is applied, not constructed: it is not so on

⁸⁰ Grammar of Ornament (1928 ed.), p. 2. However, examining some of Jones' decorative work for London's 1851 Crystal Palace one would not find much correspondence in the two men's theories of ornament.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 154. See also, p. 29: "Nature should be idealized not copied..."

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

the Egyptian capital; there we feel the whole capital is the ornament,--to remove any portion of it would destroy it.⁸³

The discussion of Roman ornament (not favorably reviewed) was seized upon by Jones as the occasion to inject criticism of current practices. The tendency of the Romans to blanket, in a sort of mechanical way, forms with a particular motive has had repercussions in his time, Jones thought. Lethaby would agree with the general sense of Jones' criticisms:

The fatal facilities which the Roman system of decoration gives for manufacturing ornament, by applying acanthus leaves to any form and in any direction, is the chief cause of the invasion of this ornament into most modern works. It requires so little thought, and is so completely a manufacture, that it has encouraged architects in an indolent neglect of one of their especial provinces, and the interior decorations of building have fallen into hands most unfitted to supply their place.⁸⁴

Like Lethaby later, Jones thought that contemporary architects were abandoning their control of the ornamental aspects of architecture. In Jones' case it seems possible that he meant architects to resume control as principal designers of architectural ornament whereas Lethaby seemed to want architects to fulfill their obligation by making sure that ornamental work was responsibly delegated to competent "free" artists. But Jones also expressed, like Lethaby would later, a sensitivity to the effect on the executant artist who had to deal with tiresome designs:

...unfortunately, it has been too much the practice in our time to abandon to hands most unfitted for the task the adornment of the structural features of buildings, and more especially their exterior decorations.

The fatal facility of manufacturing ornament which the revived use of the acanthus leaf has given, has tended very much to this result, and deadened the creative instinct in artists' minds. What could so readily be done by another, they have left that other to do; and so far have abdicated their high position of the architect, the head and chief...⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., p. 33.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 155.

Jones had particular enthusiasm for Moorish ornament. He saw in it appropriateness and integrative qualities: “In the art of the Moors...we never find a useless or superfluous ornament; every ornament arises quietly and naturally from the surface decorated. They ever regard the useful as a vehicle for the beautiful; ...”⁸⁶

Jones’ other criticisms of contemporary approaches to ornament emphasized again the importance of not copying from the past. In the section on primitive art he urged, reminiscent of Laugier, a return to primal methods:

...in much of the ornament of civilisations, the first impulse which generated received form [is] enfeebled by constant repetition and the ornament is often-times misapplied, and instead of first seeking the most convenient form and adding beauty, all beauty is destroyed, because all fitness [is], by superadding ornament to ill-contrived form. If we would return to a more healthy condition, we must even be as little children or as savages; we must get rid of the acquired, and artificial, and return to and develop natural instincts.⁸⁷

Jones’ emphasis on appropriateness of ornament and his interest in curbing what he saw as too much emphasis on creating “original” work had its later counterpart in Lethaby. Writing uncomplimentarily of the Crystal Palace exhibition (in whose decoration he himself had been considerably involved) he wrote:

...from one end to the other of the vast structure there could be found but a fruitless struggle after novelty, irrespective of fitness, that all design was based upon a system of copying and misapplying the received forms of beauty of every bygone style of Art, without one single attempt [does this include self-indictment?] to produce an Art in harmony with our present wants and means of production—the carver in stone, the worker

in metal, the weaver and the painter, borrowing from each other, and alternately misapplying the forms peculiarly appropriate to each...⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 77-78. An interesting, perhaps contrary appraisal of the current state of English architectural ornament is offered in the same work by the architect Matthew Digby Wyatt (who contributed the text for some of the sections): “France is...at the present time, master of the field in...the erection of ornament...but so rapid and hopeful is the progress now taking place in this country, that it is by no means impossible...to say that we might not be equal before too long...” (p. 151).

One can notice dissimilarities between Jones' and Lethaby's ideas on ornament. Early in Grammar, Jones provides a long list of Propositions assembled under the heading "General Principles in the Arrangement of Form and Colour in Architecture and the Decorative Arts, which are advocated throughout this work." Some of the points have been brought up earlier in this discussion. A number of them show a more formal cast than Lethaby would have endorsed. For example (Proposition 3): "As Architecture, as all the works of the Decorative Arts [which Jones said included architecture] should possess fitness, proportion, harmony, the result of what is repose." Others of Jones' Propositions show an attitude derived more from classical views (for example Proposition 6, in regard to general form: "...nothing could be removed and leave the design equally good or better") or might be too restrictive for Lethaby (Proposition 8: "All ornament should be based upon a geometrical construction.") Lethaby would find Jones' proposition on "graining" (Proposition 35) perhaps too permissive: "...imitation, such as the graining of woods, and of the various coloured marbles, allowable only when the employment of the thing imitated, would not have been inconsistent" and, at least later in Lethaby's life, the one on the necessity of decoration (Proposition 5, "construction should be decorated") unacceptable.⁸⁹ Lethaby had suggested how ornament, as traditionally understood, might no longer be relevant. Jones seems to have taken the opposite approach: "The desire [to ornament] is absent in no civilisation...and it grows and increases with all in the ratio of their progress in civilisation."⁹⁰

Jones thought, like Lethaby, that "ornament" should be considered subservient to structure, but reserved for it an importance greater than Lethaby would admit—the architectural works' soul:

Although ornament is most properly accessory to architecture and never should be allowed to usurp the place of proper structural features, or to overload or disguise them, it is in all cases the very soul of an architectural movement; and by the ornament alone can we judge truly of the amount of care and mind which has been devoted to the work. All else in any building may be the result of rule and compass, but by the ornament of a building, we can best discover how far the architect was at the same time an artist.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Material quoted in this paragraph thus far from Jones' Grammar or Ornament, op.cit., p. 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 82. The idea of ornament as a building's "soul" is repeated on p. 154.

Ornament, while not the chief feature of a building according to Jones (that honor is reserved for “structure”), is the determinant of the building’s style, again ascribing to ornament more importance than Lethaby would have: “The chief features of a building which form a style are, first, the means of support; secondly the means of spanning space between the supports, and thirdly, the formation of the roof. It is the decoration of these structural features which gives the characteristics of style...”⁹² Architects may be engineers as well, but Jones suggested that in the evaluation of a building’s ornament one had the most suitable means for determining the quality of the designer as an artist:

By the ornament of a building, we can judge more truly of the creative power which the artist has brought to bear upon the work. The general proportions of the building may be good, the moulding may be more or less accurately copied from the most approved models; but the very instant that ornament is attempted, we see how far the architect is at the same time the artist. It is the best measure of the care and refinement bestowed upon the work. To put ornament in the right place is not easy; to render that ornament at the same time a superadded beauty and an expression of the intention of the whole work, is still more difficult.⁹³

One oddity of Jones’ attitude towards ornament is a tendency to think of it as a quality so distinct from architecture that he could suggest that a new direction in ornament could be undertaken independently of, even preceding, new developments in architecture. How this could be reconciled with his insistence on a truly integrative and appropriate ornament is difficult to see:

...how is any new style of ornament to be invented or developed? Some will probably say, a new style of architecture must first be found, and we should be beginning at the wrong end to commence with ornament.

We do not think so...the desire for works of ornament is co-existent with the earliest attempts of civilisation and of every people; and that architecture adopts ornament, does not create it.

⁹² Ibid, p. 156.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 154.

This latter thought, the phenomena of the adoption of ornament, by architecture, led Jones to conclude: “We therefore are justified in the belief, that a new style of ornament may be produced independently of a new style or [of?] architecture; and moreover, that it would be one of the readiest means of arriving at a new style...”⁹⁴

Other Comparisons—Especially with Contemporaries

Jones was still living the year Lethaby embarked on his own individual architectural practice. He had ample opportunity in the past to implement any of Jones’ ideas he might find acceptable, through his work in Lauder’s and then Shaw’s offices. Many other architectural figures, with their particular approach to ornament, influenced English architecture between the dates of the first publication of the Grammar of Ornament and the principle appearance of Lethaby’s view on the subject in the first decades of the twentieth century. William Butterfield and his Ecclesiologists, for example, represent a particular emphasis on mediievally-derived ornament. While the source of inspiration was correct, this work would have been found too literally-interpreted by Lethaby’s own mentors, Ruskin, Morris, and Webb.⁹⁵

Lethaby’s point of view was quite close to that of the latter three. Other, younger associates also show a similarity of thought to Lethaby. One could mention the artist Walter Crane, at least in the 1880s and 1890s. Crane’s preface to the 1889 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Catalog criticizes the false and imitative quality of much current work and suggested that “plain material and surfaces are infinitely preferable to inorganic and inappropriate ornament.”⁹⁶ In his essay “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings” in Art and Life (1897), Crane disparaged the “inorganic” (not nature-based) decoration currently being used to cover new steel structural systems: “[steel framing on new commercial buildings were]...fantastically masked with playful and flamboyant designs in terra-cotta, heightened with glass

⁹⁴ These last passages in the paragraph are also from Grammar..., op.cit., p. 155.

⁹⁵ Lethaby’s church at Brockhampton, however, despite innovative use of concrete, seems to go beyond the Arts and Crafts objective of capturing the medieval building spirit and seems also a close approximation of medieval form.

⁹⁶ Op.cit., pp. 6-7.

mosaic, cheap stained glass, and iron-work...the acme of inorganic decoration.⁹⁷ The article was focused on public art and Crane stressed, as had Ruskin, that the decoration of public buildings should be the highest form of popular art...as it had been in the middle ages. Artists should decorate the “public schools” with mural designs to: “...fill an important part in stimulating and cultivating the imagination, informing the mind, and unifying sentiment under the spell of association by means of painted histories and typical figures.” Crane provided some interesting comments, related to Lethaby’s inclination towards minimal ornamentation of some objects, about how to treat the design of objects brought about by new invention. On the subject of gas fixtures: “...anything superadded [to the bare necessities] was apt to take the unfortunate look of ornamental excrescence, because really unrelated and inorganic. The monstrosity known as the ‘gasolier’, rooted itself...in the private and public ceiling.” Similar problems were cited when electricity came in. Fixtures for these used the forms developed formerly for gas-lights, and were not appropriate. Crane remarked “...the light wire and electric torch in its simplest form of pendant string and incandescent, pear-shaped glass, has a certain elegance and suggestiveness...”⁹⁸

Thomas Graham Jackson, another architectural contemporary of Lethaby’s had similar concerns. In his Reason in Architecture (1906), Jackson opposed imitative ornament (based on the past) as well as calling for a rejection of recent attempts to create an ahistorically-based new approach to ornament (Art Nouveau). Some theme titles in his book relate to Lethaby’s concerns—“Imitation and Sham?”, “Abuse of Ornament,” “Reason in Ornament.”⁹⁹ Another contemporary, Lawrence Weaver, writing on the topic “William Morris and his School” in Small Country Houses of Today commented on the practice of novelty and variety for its own sake (“The danger of massing different patterns for the mere joy of their novelty and variety is past...”) and, like Lethaby, suggested that the state of mind of the worker and the reflection of this in the object produced “Ornament that was or should be, the outcome of a mutual gaiety

⁹⁷ Crane, “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings,” (written 1896, published 1897) p. 118.

⁹⁸ Ibid., remaining quoted passages in the paragraph are, successively, from pp. 138, 152-153 and 122-123.

⁹⁹ Jackson, pp. 61, 173, and 179.

and pleasure in decoration,..."¹⁰⁰ A large number of Lethaby's contemporaries in architecture were producing ornament less ideologically conceived—often drawn from the original sources of the particular Revival-style being worked in. Aston Webb in his Baroque Revival idiom and Mewes' and Davis' with their more Beaux Arts classicism provided the miles of "egg and tongue" and "acres of vermiculation" Lethaby complained about.

On the Continent, there is a parallel (more with Jones than with Lethaby) in the extended discussion on ornament in the theory of the German architect Gottfried Semper (1803-1879), especially in his interest in plant forms. Semper's works, however, filled most often with Renaissance or Baroque-Revival ornament, would not be symbiotic with Lethaby's principles. The later prominence of Germany in the development of early twentieth century architectural design—through the advent of the Bauhaus and contributory events—is seen to have some ancestry in the ideas of the English Arts and Crafts (and thus perhaps, by the thought of Lethaby). While common attitudes traceable from England to Germany in this regard, they appear not to include, at least by the time of the Bauhaus stage of developments, much of Lethaby's attitudes about ornament. The important exception might be the willingness to do without it altogether, which the Bauhaus complex itself seems to do (notwithstanding free-standing sculpture and framed oil canvasses). The Austrian, Adolph Loos, is interesting for his call to get rid of ornament entirely ("Ornament and Crime," 1908) about the same time as Lethaby's similar pronouncements. On the other side of the Atlantic, one finds Sullivan suggesting that ornament should be given up, at least until some new line of development could be initiated. Ornament is, of course, one of the essential ingredients in the success of Sullivan's own realized work. Both Sullivan's work and that of his pupil, Frank Lloyd Wright, fits admirably Lethaby's prescription for non-imitative, fresh ornament derived from "Nature." Irving Gill's work on the west coast of the United States in the first decade of the twentieth century shows the implementation of a non-ornamental aesthetic at great distance from London and Vienna.

¹⁰⁰Weaver, Small Country Houses of Today, Vol. 2, 1919, p. 86.

Ornament in Lethaby's Design Work

The focus of this study is Lethaby's theory, but in the discussion of his ideas on ornament, an understanding of his views on this subject may benefit from some comments about the ornamentation that appears in his designs. Three early designs from the late 1870s (actually all from 1877 and all published in The Building News) show an eclecticism in utilizing forms (and attendant approaches to ornamentation) derived from the historical styles. All three were competition designs submitted to the News' "Designing Club" series competitions. One, the "Cemetery Chapel" is an interpretation of the Romanesque, more intricate in scale than one by H.H. Richardson, for example, might be. A number of tonal contrasts in materials are indicated for the façade. Lethaby's "Mountain Chapel" is a combination of Romanesque and Gothic elements, while his design for a "Lodge and Covered Entrance" features a relatively plain lodge contrasted with an elaborately ornamented entrance structure. The latter is much like a classical propylaea, although one enters laterally. The gates show ornate iron grill work and there are sculptural figures atop the column shafts at the corners of the entrance structure.

Among smaller items designed in conjunction with the Building News' competitions, are designs for a hall fireplace and another fireplace (both from 1877) and a "Fender, Coal Scuttle and Fire Iron," set submitted in the following year. One fireplace shows a medievalizing direction featuring a large Tudor arch, with much carved stone work also indicated. The other is classical in form and detail, with massive side consoles, and egg-and-dart patterns and dentils. The fender, scuttle and fire-irons set shows tools with ornate handles and scroll work on the wrought iron fender and scuttle.¹⁰¹ But one could turn to the number of fireplace sketches among Lethaby's drawings at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection in London and find a more arts and crafts-oriented design (undated, unfortunately) featuring an abstracted tree motif over the mantel.

¹⁰¹Lethaby's design for "A Beryl Shrine," publ. in The Architect, 20 Jan., 1888, as an illustration to D.G. Rosetti's poem Rose Mary has no obvious precedent for its ornament—it is more a sheer product of Lethaby's imagination and the interpretation he was able to give Rosetti's words.

Of Lethaby's early furniture designs, at least that for which an illustration or description found its way into print, one could notice a table and a cabinet exhibited as part of the 1890 (Third) Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Neither object is as simple or direct in ornament or form as Lethaby was to later advocate.¹⁰² A marble mantel designed by Lethaby and exhibited at the Society's 1893 exhibition shows more restraint and also Lethaby's disconcerting contrasting of tones. Aymer Vallance, reviewing the exhibit for Studio magazine, after describing a similarly conceived piece by George Jack, wrote of Lethaby's mantel: "the same sobriety characterized the inlaid marble of Mr. Lethaby's...a sobriety, however, which is somewhat marred by the violence of the contrast in the parti-coloured marble on which alone it relies for decorative effect." Commenting on another work by Lethaby in the same exhibit, Vallance saw an abstinence from over-ornamentation which is more difficult to see when viewing the piece today: "In...the cabinet of inlaid walnut Mr. Lethaby has shown however the rococo example furnished as by the Dutch marquetry worker [presumably the actual constructor of the cabinet] may be turned with due restraint and dignified purpose."¹⁰³ The Arts and Crafts approach to furniture can be seen, in addition to the R.I.B.A. fireplace drawing already mentioned, in Lethaby's contribution to Morris and Company's remodeling of Stanmore Hall in Middlesex (c. 1890-1891). Lethaby's staircase is clearly in the Arts and Crafts idiom, as is its development of vegetal patterns. The matrix of vine tendrils is typical of Morris' company although the "brittle" line quality is particularly Lethaby. Two simple dining room fireplaces are in the Arts and Crafts spirit as well. Another small drawing room fireplace by Lethaby features a similar approach, with flower and vine motives on the side and on the over-mantel.

Richard Norman Shaw, for whom Lethaby worked for about ten years before beginning practice on his own, supplied his buildings with ornament more abundant and more referential to past historical styles than contemporary Arts and Crafts philosophy advocated. It is difficult to know Lethaby's role, as Shaw's

¹⁰²Illustrated in Edwardian Architecture and its Origins (1975), op.cit., p. 133, in the chapter "William Lethaby's Buildings" by Godfrey Rubens.

¹⁰³Both Vallance quotes are from the Studio, October, 1893, "The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at the New Gallery," p. 16.

chief draftsman, in decisions about ornament regarding works passing through Shaw's office during Lethaby's tenure. The result in these commissions was a variety of ornamental treatments. The Flemish gable forms and window heads of the Alliance Assurance Building (1881-82) and the gable outline of the house at 180 Queens Gate, Kensington (1884-85) fall outside Arts and Crafts taste, as do Baroque doorway details and window pediments in the gables of New Scotland Yard (1887-90). The striated tones of the wall material (alternating passages of brick and stone) seem a bit gaudy if judged by the tastes of the Arts and Crafts rather than, say, by that of Butterfield. The house at 170 Queen's Gate, Kensington (1887-1888) is quintessential Georgian Revival—in the design of quoins, dormers, and entrance doorpiece. More like the approach to which Lethaby subscribed was that of the more austere exteriors of Shaw's house at 42 Netherall Gardens, Hampstead (1887-1888, now demolished) except for the elaborate curve of the gable ends and that of the earlier Tabard Inn and Shop for Bedford Park (c. 1880). These were plain, with architectural interest provided through massing (the projecting bays for example) instead of through ornament. Shaw's Church of the Holy Trinity, Latimore Road, London (1887) is said to be one in which Lethaby was actively involved. The decorative treatment of the main nave space is simply and unadorned. The altar features a tapestry showing an Arts and Crafts approach in its execution.

In examining drawings for the interiors of Shaw's projects, one encounters a number of them which may have been done by Lethaby, as thorough students of Lethaby's hand have so attributed. Among those at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection is a section cut through a "Morning Room" showing alterations (c. 1880's) for Shaw's earlier (1874-1875) house at 196 Queen's Gate. Here there is intricate ornament in profusion. Much carving is indicated—the door and its frame heavily so; wall panels incorporate interesting pilasters with Renaissance ornament. In an 1880 drawing for "Flete House" in Devon, an interior elevation of one of the long walls for a library shows bookshelves encased in multi-lited glass doors with richly carved attending wood members and a decoratively-scrolled base. Morris-type wallpaper is indicated above the height of the bookcase. Among the fireplace designs which may be attributable to Lethaby in the Shaw collection there is an elevation of the fireplace in Flete House

showing heavily carved surfaces, with sections given over to heraldic emblems. Another such design among those attributable to Lethaby, shows in perspective a gigantic fireplace extensively carved. Here the Arts and Crafts direction with floral patterns is noticeable. Some classical detailing also shows through. There is also a drawing of a dining room fireplace for Shaw's "Dawpool" (1882-1885) ascribed to Lethaby, making one wonder about the latter's role in the detailing of the imposing, heavily ornamented Jacobean fireplace in the Picture Gallery in the same building.¹⁰⁴

Turning to Lethaby's architectural work in separate practice, and his first commission, the manor house at Avon Tyrell (1891), one does see the diminishment in ornament which has been noted in his theory and which is characteristic of much of the work of the Arts and Crafts architects. Looking at a view of the garden façade one does not see much ornamentation. There is a checkerboard pattern worked out in stone on the massive brick chimney face.¹⁰⁵ A principal door is outlined in stone and also the last (southernmost) window bay. Stone quoins contrasting with the red brick wall surface are also added on this bay as well as some white stone pieces [a white stone course?] between the first and second floor in all the projecting bays and in the gables. The chimneypieces show an ornamental quality in the faceting expressing the various flues in combination. Just around the corner to the north, from the garden elevation, Lethaby has installed on the wall above a first floor door a plaque with a playful, gamboling deer bracketed by two hearts in relief. The south elevation reveals one detail of historical reference—one of the few from the Renaissance that Lethaby permitted himself, the Serlian window motif. Other than these features, and a pair of carved birds surmounting the cornice of the entrance court façade there is little on the exterior of Avon Tyrell of a directly ornamental nature.

For the interior at Avon Tyrell one might note the fireplace design for the main living hall. It features a large dark and light marble overmantel—plain in line, relying on the material and stark contrast of the juxtaposed checkerboard squares (checkerboards were a favorite motif of Lethaby) for decorative

¹⁰⁴Illustrated in the German publication *Das Englische Haus*, *op.cit.* The house is dated 1880 in this work by Muthesius.

¹⁰⁵Checkerboard patterns also appear on the exterior of the north elevation of the stable and on the east end.

effect. In some of the other fireplaces, the veining in the marble is so active that perhaps Lethaby thought of it as a decorative pattern. The main staircase, opening into the living hall and roughly opposite the fireplace, displays a terminal newel post carved with an ornate vine and floral motif of a kind popular with Arts and Crafts designers. Several ceilings benefit from the intricate plastering technique of fellow Arts and Crafts architect and colleague, Ernest Gimson—in the dining room, for example, with an organic motif of intersecting grape vines.

Much of Lethaby's approach to ornament here was noticed soon after this by the attentive German architect, Hermann Muthesius, stationed at his embassy in London. Returning to Germany, he commented in the first volume of his influential Das Englische Haus, on the austerity of Avon Tyrell's entrance front. Decorative ornament in the interior was present only on the ceilings (Gimson's work), he wrote, while the walls showed the virtue of "genuine" hand stucco work where "color is renounced." The living hall fireplace he found "sleek, smooth, unpretentious" and forms overall showed "great reservation." All of Lethaby's structures (as he could well have seen by 1908) were "austere, rigorous, stringent."¹⁰⁶

Another of Lethaby's houses ("The Hurst," 1893) in Sutton Coldfield near Birmingham is also notably sparse in ornament inside and out. One of the few noticeable exterior adornments is again Lethaby's use of the Serlian Window, this time in the north elevation, near the principal entrance. From the outside it stood out (before the house's destruction) against an otherwise plain façade and seemed to locate an important space in the interior. This is actually not the case, however, as it was employed to allow light into what is a rather small entrance hall. Looking at views of the garden elevation, one can notice some ornamentation provided by the stone quoins (contrasting to the brick) applied to the outward most angles of the prominently projecting bays. Here also, on the advanced face of the bays, four stone diamonds interspaced between the fenestration serving the first and second stories. The checkerboard motive appeared as at Avon Tyrell, as one of the few passages of interior ornament—this time over the

¹⁰⁶Quoted parts of these last three sentences from Das Englische Haus, Vol. I (1908), p. 151, translated by this author.

dining fireplace.¹⁰⁷ Ornamental plastering, also a feature in the earlier work, is present in the interiors of this house as well. Lawrence Weaver, in his comments accompanying the illustrations of the house in Volume I of his Small Country Houses of Today (1905) commented upon its ornamental “characteristics” and, like Muthesius, found them agreeable. Weaver wrote of the “delightful simplicity of the entrance hall” and of the “restraint in furnishing.” Regarding the dining room fireplace:

When one remembers the orgies of pilasters, consoles and shelves which Early Victorian architects dignified with the name of mantel-pieces, this simple thing strikes the eye with a sense of gratitude. The quiet alternation of green and white slabs apparently more soothingly combined here and the austere little moulding that forms the inner and outer frames give a feeling of large satisfaction, while above, the dull white and rich, low modelling of the plaster foliage give a pleasant relief both in colour and texture.

It is too often the case that furniture and ornament smother a room and the intention of the architect in its proportions is buried in an aggregation of chattels.¹⁰⁸

Melsetter House (from 1898) in the Orkneys, shows Lethaby’s austere style of ornamentation in an environment where it was traditionally at home—northern Scotland. The exterior, and interior as well, are again found to be quite plain. Some Scottish historic decorative forms are present in the crows-foot treatment of the gable end of at least one gable. Other ornament at Melsetter includes in the garden elevation (east) the application of some six-pointed stars (found also at his All Saints Church and on two sides of the garden pavilion at Avon Tyrell) and hearts divided into four quadrants. The crows-foot gable, a feature of traditional Scottish residential architecture, would help fit the new building into its regional environment. Interiors bear the imprint, although judging from photos, much subdued, of the work of Morris’ firm—for example the tapestries. Lethaby himself was involved in furniture designs of similar approach—for example a sideboard for Melsetter now in London, with foliated designs on the two end panels. Gimson again handled the plastering and Lethaby provided some relief to the plain lines of one of the major fireplaces by using a bold scallop-shape on the overmantel.

¹⁰⁷The checkerboard motif mentioned at Avon Tyrell and “The Hurst” appears also in the drawings for the apse in the Liverpool Cathedral competition (1902) which Lethaby and his co-applicants entered.

¹⁰⁸Quoted passages from Weaver, pp. 79-81, Small Country Houses of Today.

In the New Forest, another residence by Lethaby “High Coxlease,” was completed in 1901.

Restraint is again an important factor in appearance. The entrance front is plain with highly organized bands of windows. There are diamond patterns in brick adjacent to the outlining of the chimney flues and there is a peculiar entrance portico of stone. The stone pieces composing the latter are given an “organic,” homogenous emphasis by the rounded shapes but the overall effect reminds one of a mushroom or perhaps an Indian portico from the Muslim Period. On the garden front, the Serlian Window motif again appears and there are some subdued horizontally-ranged patterns in brick in the gable adjacent to the window mentioned.

The Eagle Insurance Building (1898-1900) in Birmingham, Lethaby’s only realized commercial work (done in collaboration with the Birmingham architect Joseph Lancaster Ball) would logically be expected to show abstinence in ornament—at least if one principle of modern commercial design (the clearing away of the non-essential for maximum return of investment) was followed. While it is true that Eagle’s interiors were markedly sparse, the ornamentation of the facade is, oddly, more noticeable than in any of his residential designs. Not that the principal elevation is not “restrained” in comparison with the palatial opulence provided for some contemporary commercial buildings by Beaux Arts-trained English architects. It would be difficult to find a specific historical referent for the treatment of the facade. The top story displays a series of alternating semi-circular and triangular forms and a cornice of wavy lines. The intervening attic story face features round (or perhaps oval) plain medallions of stone set off against the brick. Vaguely classicizing projecting dentils are carried over the heads of the top floor windows while the mezzanine windows have square tablets over them. Lethaby, while rejecting derivative ornament as applied by most practitioners of his day, seems to have been trying here, to develop a new vocabulary of ornament based on abstract, geometrical details. The alternating semi-circular and triangular forms, never-the-less harkens back to Renaissance practice—for example, of alternating triangular and segmental pediments over the windows of the Farnese Palace in Rome.

As Principal of London’s Central School of Arts and Crafts, Lethaby must have played a considerable role, this time as “client,” in the planning of the school’s new facility on Southampton Row.

Designed by A. Halcrow Verstage (mainly) in 1907, the building presents a plain facade, although there are intricacies in the forms of the component parts. There was though, probably more ornament than Lethaby would like, particularly in the fancy alternating square and round window openings in the attic story and the eruption of classicism at the building's principal cornice, complete with broken pediments, etc.

Lethaby's only church, All Saints, Brockhampton (commissioned 1900; built 1901-1902) supplies the strongest feeling of tradition—from the outside it looks like a parish church in the medieval vernacular tradition, one that could have been there for hundreds of years. As in Lethaby's other works, one finds the exterior without much ornament, although one could wonder what limits budgetary considerations may have placed on the design. Those ornamental touches one does encounter include the zigzag trimming of the church's thatch roof and of the church-yard gate structure near their roof ridge line and the zigzag brick designs around the cornice of the main tower.¹⁰⁹ Tendencies to ornament also appear in the diamond-shaped mullion of the fenestration in the transeptal wall, in the entrance tower and in the lighting of the main tower. The nave, likewise, contains some stone tracery (although simple) along the sides, in "clover-leaf" shapes.

The interior of All Saints presents a quite plain aspect over-all with most of the decoration reserved for the altar and its proximity and for the baptismal font at the opposite end. The nave ceiling offers no more than a contrast in tones between the intermittent stone arches and the intervening exposed concrete surfaces. The stone font shows a grape-vine motif, typically Arts and Crafts. Similar in style also is the carved wood pulpit (illustrating Christ preaching to the country people, appropriately enough for an estate church) and the choir stalls (carved with symbols of the Four Evangelists). Stained glasswork with realistic, not abstract, figures were furnished by Christopher Whall's studio and tapestries, designed by Edward Burne-Jones, were provided by Morris' workshop.¹¹⁰ In 1915, Lethaby provided designs for new

¹⁰⁹These forms may be derived from Anglo-Saxon ornament.

¹¹⁰Whall, Burne-Jones and Morris were all Arts and Crafts design allies of Lethaby.

church stalls for an extant church in Kent at Four Elms. These called for wood carving similar in approach to that at Brockhampton—naturalistic carvings of various flowers.

Approaches in Practice to Ornament—Contemporaries

A number of architectural contemporaries of Lethaby who chose the Arts and Crafts design path produced works with the same approach to ornament. There is little, if anything, unique in this respect in Lethaby's work—either in the restraint from ornament or in the characteristics of the little that was provided. As has been previously brought out, other contemporary writers put similar ideas about ornament into print, but Lethaby wrote more and was in a position to talk about it more to the public, bombarding the unconverted over a more sustained period of time. Shaw, who had no commitment to the Arts and Crafts aesthetic regarding ornament, sometimes did work that shows a similar approach, even before Lethaby's arrival in his office, his simple houses in Bedford Park (built c. 1880) for example.¹¹¹

Of the architectural practitioners of Shaw's generation, Webb was the other great influence on Lethaby. One of the works by Webb most admired by his follower was "Standen" (1892). A major Arts and Crafts piece essentially devoid of ornament, it does feature an area of exterior wall surface with checkerboard patterns (flint and brick) like the one Lethaby used at Avon Tyrell the previous year. Here also, outside the garden front, is a curiously bulbous stone awning which reminds one of Lethaby's entryway at High Coxlease ten years later.¹¹²

Gimson, with whom Lethaby collaborated closely, produced in his own work buildings that were generally plain, smooth and without ornament—his "White House" at Leicester and the Bedales School for example. His furniture, upon which he concentrated more than on architecture, also shows only sparing ornament (some flowers and leaf motives were included), the best pieces being very direct and

¹¹¹Muthesius noticed these and illustrated them in Vol. 1 (1908) of *Das Englische Haus*, pp. 134-135. After Lethaby left Shaw, however, there were more like #185 Queen's Gate (designed 1889 ff. and executed 1890-1891), with, for example, its fully detailed Ionic dining room columns.

¹¹²Of older practitioners, one might notice the works of Lethaby's collaborator on Eagle Insurance, Joseph Lancaster Ball. His house at Winterbourne, Edgbaston (near Birmingham) of 1903 is smooth and simple, without ornament.

simple.¹¹³ A number of men of Gimson's generation followed Lethaby's lead. Many were taught at the London Central School and the London County Council's Architect's Office took in a number of them. In this latter location they joined older men sympathetic to Arts and Crafts ideas and together they adopted this philosophy and applied it to publicly-funded construction intended for various uses. Quite plain in ornament are the worker's houses (medium high-rise Arts and Crafts works) built in London under the leadership of Thomas Blashill at the Architect's Department. An early example of austere treatment (relying instead on the quality of craftsmanship) was Hogarth House, Westminster (started in 1889)—the first building of the Millbank Estate. At the Hammersmith Trade School for Girls, the interesting play of form (dormer projection and chimney flues), not ornament, provided architectural interest. Later, Charles Winmill, of the Department was responsible for the simple treatment accorded the firestation at Hampstead (1914-1915). Architects of similar persuasion also won competitions for publicly-funded work in London—Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer for the Mary Ward Settlement House, for example. Their house (before 1908) at Froghole, Acremead, Kent, shows their non-urban work in the Arts and Crafts style. Smooth, unornamented and with the odd, depressed arches over doors preferred in Lethaby's own work. Despite Lethaby's influence as teacher at the London Central School and consultant to the Architect's Department, more ambitious works like the London County Hall went up with a classicizing colonnade on its central, river-oriented elevation despite the architect's (Ralph Knott's) supposed training at L.C.C. and Lethaby's role as a conferee in the design process.

One can see Lethaby's approach reflected in the work of another contemporary, one with whom he had occasionally collaborated, Ernest Newton. Examples include the residence Newton designed at Baughurst (1902), Hampshire, and his house, "Flint House," (1913), Goring—both very plain.¹¹⁴ Also, another Arts and Crafts designer, Detmar Blow, was responsible for a house at Happisburgh, Norfolk

¹¹³It does appear that on occasion he resorted to ornament through spindling—the back staves of chairs, for example.

¹¹⁴Lethaby had finished Newton's church during a period when Newton was ill and could not attend to supervision. In the latter example, checkerboarding with flint, of the Lethabian type is provided on the parapet for the entrance porch.

(built in 1900) utilizing thatch roofing treated similarly to that at Lethaby's All Saints, although more emphasis is placed on texturing the wall surface than in Lethaby's works.¹¹⁵ To document the ornamental abstinence of another Lethaby associate, Halsey Ricardo, one could cite the houses he designed at Letchworth in 1905 or, on a larger scale, the much earlier drawing for the Aberystwyth College Competition (1886). The work of still another associate, Leonard Stokes, the Telephone Exchange, Gerrard Street, London of 1904 (now destroyed), shows this architect's affinity with Arts and Crafts' inclination toward ornamental restraint. Actual ornamentation of the façade (rather Baroque in provenance) appeared only over the two main entries but there was, and presumably Lethaby would have found this interesting, exterior "counter-changing" of material elsewhere on the façade.

Two more, better known contemporary designers in the Arts and Crafts sphere, C.F.A Voysey and Edwin Lutyens can also be brought up in comparative comments about approach to ornament. Voysey's work more often was of a pristine bent (for example, his Studio Cottage, Hammersmith, from 1891) although a few designs, like that of a country house from 1889 seems by comparison, very ornate, eclectic, and considering Voysey's talent for tightly organizing facades, quite disorganized. The 1889 house showed a much more complicated approach to surface treatment than he became known for—with prominent surfaces of inlaid design for the walls and a number of changes of material. Lutyens in his earlier days also worked within the parameters of the Arts and Crafts' idiom. To cite an example by Lutyens notable for its lack of ornament one could mention Tigbourne Court (1889), Surrey. The attractiveness of the façade is owed mainly to the interesting shaping of the various planes of brick although there are some classical details calling out the entrances. Lutyens changed, however, from such Arts and Crafts related work as Tigbourne Court, as well as the house at Barton Saint Mary, East Grimsdyke (1906) and Deanery Gardens (1889-1901) in Berkshire to direct expression in the revival styles and the resultant ornamentation. Such an example is "Heathcote" (1906), Yorkshire, executed as English Baroque Revival.

¹¹⁵The house was illustrated in Vol. II (1910) of Muthesius' Das Englische Haus. It was also featured in Vol. II (1919) of Weaver's Small Country Houses of Today.

In northern England Lethaby's approach to ornament is mirrored in that of another fellow Arts and Crafts "soldier," Edgar Wood (founder of the Northern Art Worker's Guild, later in partnership with J. Henry Sellars). The smooth and plain surfaces of Wood's Long Street Schools and Chapel (1897-1901), and "Dunarden" (1898), both in Middleton, are good examples, as is the house at #121 Park Road, Hale in Cheshire, done in 1906. The shops Wood did in 1908 in Middleton show a newer direction with large expanses of façade decorated with chevroned tile panes and the Dromsfield Office Building, Oldham, Lancashire, of 1906-1907 (in partnership with Sellars) shows, in addition to unornamented surfaces, the rectilinear, flat roofs associated with contemporary developments on the Continent.

Even further north, in Scotland, one finds Arts and Crafts parallels with Lethaby in the work of James Maclaren—his cottage in Perthshire (c. 1889), of rustic, Gimsonian simplicity and his Town Hall, Aberfeld, Perthshire (1889-1890)—simple but with Richardsonian power in the massing of the entrance arches. Similarly, John Campbell showed the kind of direct unornamented approach to commercial building as Lethaby's Eagle Insurance, especially in the rear elevation of his Northern Building in Glasgow of 1908-1909, with brick bays containing large flush steel casement windows. The sleekness of the Northern's exterior is closer in its avoidance of anything but the most simplified expression, to some of the building of the Chicago School (Holabird and Roche's buildings for example). In Scotland also, Mackintosh's "Windykill," Kilmacollm (1899-1901) is a good example of that Arts and Crafts architect's spare approach to external ornament. A.H. Mackmurdo's house "Brooklyn" in Middlesex (c. 1887) shows that architect's subscription to the principle of simple, austere masses in the Arts and Crafts idiom, although not free of classical feeling. The capitals of the first floor engaged columns for example, though not actually constructed with classical detail, show this.

The vast majority of works constructed in Lethaby's time, notwithstanding such instances as those just cited, were more heavily laden with ornament. To suggest this larger milieu in Britain in which Lethaby worked, a few of these should be mentioned. Lethaby's teacher at the Royal Academy School of Architecture showed his dedication to the classical tradition in the Baroque details intermingled with those of more Second Empire provenance in his Chateau Impneys of 1875. H.T. Hare's Town Hall at

Oxford (1892-1897) featured a particularly ornate third story with classicizing elements in a free interpretation of Jacobean. John Belcher, with Beresford Pite, supplied the heavily ornamented Institute of Chartered Accountants, London (1888-1893) with Baroque detail. Belcher's Colchester Town Hall, Essex (1897-completed 1902) shows the ornamental approach of the High Baroque Revival (as Alistair Service terms it)—a Free adaption of late Wren and of Van Brugh. The inside, too, is a wealth of classicizing detail. Edwin Richard's Cardiff City Hall (designed 1897) is dripping with Baroque ornamentation, but unlike the Colchester example, not of English inspiration. Mewes' and Davis' provided richly ornamented buildings derived from the French Beaux Arts vein, such as the Morning Post Building in London (1906-1907) while Charles Reilly's contemporary Student's Union at Liverpool University (1907) displayed the ornament appropriate to revived Georgian.

In Scotland, to juxtapose against works of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, one could mention the thoroughly Roman ornament of John Burnet's Athenaeum in Glasgow, 1886, or the later Alhambra Theatre (1910) in the same city; the latter calls to mind the massing of Wright's slightly earlier Larkin Administration Building in Buffalo (1904) but with the escapist Islamic detail popular for cinemas. Burnet in partnership with John Campbell brought the ornamental vocabulary of sixteenth century French Renaissance (with Second Empire roofs) to Glasgow via the Charing Cross Mansions of 1890-1891. Burnet's collaboration with Thomas Tait, however, seems to have resulted in some works which shift toward the denial of ornament. Tait's involvement in these seems to argue for his leadership in turning things in this direction. Examples include the Kodak Building of 1910-1911 (Kingsway, London) which is very austere, with only vestigial classicizing of forms and Adelaide House, London (1921-1925), also with simplified exteriors.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶Burnet did not like the Kodak design, according to Tait. Burnet stated that Tait was not thoroughly involved in conceiving any of the partnerships designs until the 1920s (p. 209 in the chapter "Sir John James Burnet" by David Walker in Edwardian Architecture and its Origins (1975), op.cit.)

Summary

This chapter has discussed the roots of Lethaby's ideas about ornament and gone on to comment on such characteristics as his tendency to reduce the amount of ornament, and his stress on the relationship of the workman to the ornament produced by that workman. Also discussed were Lethaby's criticisms of contemporary ornament and some of his suggestions about what kind of ornament, if any, was appropriate. An examination of the treatment of ornament in Lethaby's own work was then made and some collateral examples, by others of similar mind, were furnished. Finally, to enhance the context of these examples, a few prominent works from Lethaby's time, with more profuse ornament, especially those drawing on past developments in architectural ornament were provided. Connected to Lethaby's ideas about architectural ornament are his views about building materials. Lethaby's comments and critical attitudes about these are also an important part of his theory and these will be taken up in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IX

BUILDING MATERIALS

Introduction

This chapter discusses, as a component of his architectural thought, Lethaby's thoughts about building materials in general and about specific materials. The chapter also focuses on a discussion of the materials Lethaby used in his own architectural and craft work, with an emphasis on the use he made of the "newer" building materials of his time—cast iron, for instance.

Understanding Lethaby's attitude toward these "newer" materials is given particular emphasis in an attempt to clarify the dichotomy which arises when one thinks first of Lethaby's reputation as the uncompromising (and eminent) supporter of the architectural theories of Ruskin and Morris and then of the recognition that is accorded him as one of England's architectural avant garde in the early twentieth century. How, or in what way, could the latter recognition be true, with respect to materials, if we have the first—a Ruskinian antipathy to an architecture based on, say, iron and steel. The answer lies in the nature of the shift in position which occurs in Lethaby's thinking—giving up some part of, but not every aspect of the Ruskin/Morris attitude towards non-traditional materials of building (without admitting it) and making his way into the camp of Sant' Elia, Tony Garnier, and others of visionary direction as in the use of steel and concrete and the resulting (and different) architecture.

Lethaby's significance in the context of the subject at hand might be reduced to the following four-part statement:

1. Here is the continuer, in a strong voice (and for longer than many would have thought tenable) advocating for the Arts and Crafts view of materials—the craftsman's view—materials to be worked by hand in order to draw out the unique qualities of each substance and allow these qualities to show directly, without disguise.
2. In addition, Lethaby takes the Arts and Crafts "believers" and tries to lead them to an acceptance, then an enthusiasm for the materials whose usage was greatly developed in the Industrial Revolution—the materials avoided and despised by Ruskin.
3. We see in Lethaby's writing also persuasive, influential, and early recognition of the implications the use of Industrial Age materials are going to have for architecture—how

the form and character of architecture may (or must) change and the potential these materials provide for an improved architecture.

4. Finally despite his meager endorsements of the “new materials” as reflected in his work, there is his landmark experiment in the aesthetic potential for concrete—the exposed, shuttering-marked surfaces of the nave in his 1901 church at Brockhampton.

Lethaby’s views on materials are closely related to the attitudes to be discussed in the following chapter—his views on machines, on engineering, and on science in general. The use of Industrial Age machinery is bound to the issue of using the new, Industrial Age building materials. True, the impact of the machine must have been strongly felt in Lethaby’s time in the acquisition and utilization of even traditional materials—for example, the impact of new saw mill technology and nail manufacturing on wood construction and new machines for stone quarrying. But for iron and cement production, the machine for Lethaby played an even more primary role. Also, advances in engineering determined how the newer material might be used and what new applications and forms of architectural expressions were feasible and possible.

The sequence of presentation in this chapter will first provide some details of Lethaby’s basic theory of and attitude towards building materials with some comment as to the origin of those attitudes. Next, more specific topics will form the basis of discussion. This includes his ideas about traditional building materials and, in more detail, his view about iron, steel, concrete, and some of the other “modern” materials. Some information about material usage in Lethaby’s designs will follow. A further section to place Lethaby’s ideas on the “newer” materials and his usage of them in a larger context—the contemporary development of new materials in the hands of his English contemporaries and those in other countries who, by reputation or experience, exercised some influence in this area. Last, preceding the writer’s own summary, will be mentioned some evaluative pronouncements by others as to Lethaby’s thoughts and deeds related to building materials.

Views on Materials

In an earlier chapter, the various fori open for expression of Lethaby's architectural thinking were discussed. In his published works the topic of materials arose frequently, some writings being devoted specifically to this. It is not difficult to think that building materials, as a topic, arose with similar frequency in his lectures at the Royal College of Art, at the London Central School and elsewhere, and in the discussions held at the Art Workers Guild and SPAB meetings. Too numerous to mention here are the general works (books and article series) in which Lethaby expressed his opinion on materials. A comment on materials or specific material sometimes surfaced as a part of a more general discussion, as in his study of Philip Webb, or was the subject of the sub-section of a longer series, as is the case with "Modern Materials and Methods" (October 25, 1918)—part of the series offered in The Builder of 1918-1919 entitled "A National Architecture."¹

Of more concerted efforts to write about the "materials" aspect of architecture one should mention one bound volume (his second)—Leadwork (1893). Lethaby also published a number of articles on specific materials or materials usage. Cast iron appears as the dominant subject among his earliest publications (even pre-dating Leadwork). His essay "Of Cast Iron" appearing in the 1889 catalog of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and a similar article with the same title, appeared the next year in the Journal of the Royal Society of Art. A third article with the same title, appeared in a collection of Arts and crafts essays of 1893. His lecture to the Architectural Association, "Cast Iron" was published in the February 3, 1900, edition of The Builder. More than a quarter of a century later, the same magazine published Lethaby's "English Cast Iron" in four parts (1926). Regarding specific attention to other, "newer" building materials, Peter Collins in 1959 mentioned Lethaby's 1913 lecture to the Northern

¹ See also, for example, Part IX: "Building Commonplaces—the Substance of Architecture," 2 Sept., 1921, part of the series "Modernism and Design" in The Builder. This section was organized around Lethaby's comments on various materials and entitled: "Masonry" (stone), "Bricklaying," "The Carpenter's Art," "Plastering," "Cast Iron."

Polytechnic Institute entitled “The Architectural Treatment of Reinforced Concrete.”² This lecture was reported on by The Builder (February 4 of that year), thus, these thoughts of Lethaby’s reached a wider audience.³ On the subject of traditional materials one finds the early article “Leadwork” in the 1897 Journal of the Royal Society of Art and the later “Whitewashing” in the bound 1930 Annual Reports of the SPAB.

General Attitudes

In Lethaby’s remarks about materials several points are noticeable. In his pre-twentieth century writing there is something of the Ruskin/Morris moral flavor as he writes of the “degradation” of materials as currently used—that is using them in the wrong ways. Another point is that one can learn how to use them better in the present and future by acquiring a fuller understanding of how they were used in the past. The primacy of knowledge about materials and their current usage in the overall art of building is also stressed. Another point Lethaby stressed is the need for an orderly, thorough, scientific study of materials, including their potential. “Appropriate” use, however relative such a criteria really is, was an important aspect of how materials should be used, Lethaby thought. The architect must have close contact with materials. Waste should be avoided and care should be taken that materials, once in place, express their “essential” qualities. “Localness,” also emphasized, would ensure that a building is “of its place” as well as satisfying practical considerations regarding the expense of importing material of distant origin which would, in addition, have considerably less cultural relevance. The quasi-moral issue of whether all materials are inherently equal also is brought up, but resolved ambiguously.

To more specific evidence of the views summarized above one might turn first to Lethaby’s writing of the 1890s. In “Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades” (1897), Lethaby called the need for experimentation with materials essential.⁴ In Leadwork (1893), he endorsed the notion that

² Concrete, The Vision of a New Architecture, 1750-1950, p. 135.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁴ Journal of the Royal Society, XIV, 23 July, 1897, p. 855.

certain materials were “appropriate” for certain applications.⁵ The suggestion that there were forms more appropriate to particular materials than others was also put forward in this book; materials should not be “tortured” into inappropriate forms.⁶ The virtues of using local materials are extolled and the depersonalizing, insalubrious effects of “the machine” in the providing of building materials is also highlighted in Lethaby’s 1892 essay “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman”: “The traditional knowledge of local material, the general harmony, almost as of nature’s own, when the material of the countryside is used, the craft of gathering these materials and the art of using them, is submerged in the universal deluge of dreary machine stamped tiles, or Welsh slate, ‘as specified’ by the office-bred architect.”⁷ In Leadwork Lethaby wrote of the general misuse of metals in England, in the nineteenth century: “Only in our century in England would it be possible for the metals which are so especially hers, iron, tin and lead, to have been so degraded that it is hardly possible to think of them as vehicles of art. It should not be so, for each of the metals can give us characteristics that others cannot...”⁸

Between the turn of the century and the First World War, further comments on materials were made by Lethaby. In a paper read in 1906 to the International Congress of Architects he called for improved study of materials and procedures of construction, for “...the scientific exploration of materials and constructive facts which should be as thorough as the most rigorous method will allow...”⁹ In his more general work, Architecture (1911) Lethaby, true to the Arts and Crafts viewpoint, said that architects must be brought back into close contact with materials.¹⁰ This had been true, in the past, he said, when architecture was a more commendable undertaking: “Through the ages when architecture was a direct and

⁵ Leadwork, p. 146.

⁶ A few years earlier, Walter Crane expressed a similar view in the preface of the 1889 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society’s Catalog of the Second Exhibition, p. 6: “every material has its own proper capacity and appropriate range of expression.”

⁷ Included in Architecture, A Profession or an Art?, p. 157.

⁸ Leadwork, op.cit., p. 4.

⁹ “The Relation of Modern Architecture to Craftsmanship,” 1906. Lecture given at the Seventh International Congress of Architects, London, 1906. As per repr. of his talk with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple, p. 2.

¹⁰ Op.cit., pp. 193-194.

developing art, architects were masters of building, engineers, masons, and carpenters, in immediate contact with materials.”¹¹

One could learn from the past. “Much may be gathered from the experience of Roman builders...”—including methods of vaulting in concrete and the use of hollow tiles in the walls.¹² Vitruvius, he said, gave many valuable hints on plastering and brickwork.¹³ Also in Architecture, Lethaby pointed to the influence material have on the character of the finished architectural product: “These different forms of matter [wood, stone, clay etc.] give rise to [a related]...type of construction...”¹⁴ The importance of localness also was stressed and one should pay more attention to the local building tradition in various parts of England: “These powers of all architecture are limited by the material in general use [in that area].”¹⁵ Later in Architecture he said, “We want especially for our own country a record of existing building methods and traditions of workmanship, as they are still carried on in their several localities in relation to the materials at hand; as Yorkshire walling and stone dressing... Norfolk thatching, Essex plastering, Kentish tiling.”¹⁶

In 1918, writing in The Builder, Lethaby seems to give lip service, at a late date, to the notion, perhaps traceable to Ruskin, that materials have relative, intrinsic worth. But the main thrust of the comment seems to argue for the “acceptability” of the newer building materials: “Some materials are inferior to others, but hardly any can be impossible in some service. Here, again, nothing is of itself common or unclean; it is the spirit that matters—concrete, rolled steel, cast-iron, stock-brick, deal-timber are all good in their own way.”¹⁷ Without acknowledging that the advent of new building materials is

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 193-194.

¹² Ibid., p. 98.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁷ Part IV: “Modern Materials and Methods,” 25 Oct., “A National Architecture,” The Builder, 1918, p. 261.

necessarily the excuse for radical style changes, Lethaby did suggest (to those architectural conservatives who had not yet done so) that it was time to address the use of iron and concrete in a positive manner: “Once more I must say that I have not in mind any wish to produce a new-looking style, a new style produced for its own sake would be worse than an old style copied for sentimental reasons; still, as the age of iron and concrete has come, let us face it like men.”¹⁸ He continued, with a word about Arts and Crafts concerns (and the concerns of others) as to the quality of the worker’s tasks: “In a large and sociological sense the rise of these new materials may be found undesirable, ultimately, as calling for low types of labour; but we are not going to find this out for a long while yet, and in the meantime we must do the best that may be with the different materials as they come into use.”¹⁹

In another series of articles in The Builder (“Modernism and Design”) a few years later Lethaby more decisively rejected the hierarchical valuation of materials. He debunked the “nobleness” of one material over another—pine is as good as oak if properly used.²⁰ Less philosophical thought was also offered: do not waste material.²¹ In this series he divulged that he would like to write a “Viollet-type Dictionary,” but one that would be a “Modernist parallel” in three parts, of which a section on materials would be the leading section.²² In “Modernism and Design” Lethaby, in a sardonic vein, underscored the idea that materials (and workmanship) are not some peripheral aspect of architecture:

Materials and workmanship are the essential precedents to design. Obviously stone and brick and men and tools do more than “influence” walls, they make walls. Of course tiles have influenced roofs and glass has influenced windows, and this should go without saying. We do

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Part IX: “Building Commonplaces, the Substance of Architecture” of the series “Modernism and Design” in The Builder, 2 Sept., 1921, p. 289.

²¹ Part XI: “Function, Finish, and Fitness” of the series “Modernism and Design” in The Builder, 4 Nov., 1921, p. 608.

²² “Building Commonplaces...” (1921), *op.cit.*, p. 289. The other two sections of the proposed Dictionary would be called “Functional Parts” and “Buildings.”

not need to make long arguments on how the ball and bat have influenced cricket or to prove that turf, flowers, earth, and digging must be taken into account in gardening.²³

In Philip Webb (1935, first appearing serially in The Builder in 1925), Lethaby pointed out again that building should use local materials and local methods.²⁴ Materials must be used to show their essential qualities.²⁵ Also, the importance of attention to materials as a primary concern is called out in this work, in a passage which must surely be reactionary in regard to acknowledging the arrival of “modern architecture”: “Modern architecture, if we ever have any will be Mastership in Building—craft developed out of contact with needs and materials. It won’t be design in the air...”²⁶

Origins of Lethaby’s Attitudes on Materials

Lethaby acknowledged being inspired by various past architectural writers on the subject of materials (Vitruvius, for instance) as well as by their actual usage of materials. Sometimes, as his evaluation of his immediate architectural predecessors and his general disapproval of their “style-mongering,” the most positive thing he said is that some of them had a high regard for building materials and had used them sensitively. Of those with whom he had direct contact, Ruskin, Morris, and Webb obviously influenced his view on materials. Also, his first architectural employer, Alexander Lauder must have been of some influence in this area since he was known for experimenting with materials. Ruskin’s French contemporary, Viollet-le-Duc also must have contributed to Lethaby’s thinking on the subject, judging by references to him generally and even about materials in particular.

In Lethaby’s 1890 article, “Of Cast Iron and its treatment for Artistic Purposes,” he quoted Ruskin in support of his admonition not to use one material in a way to make it look like another.²⁷ As for Morris,

²³ Part III: “The Workmanship Basis” of the series “Modernism and Design” in The Builder, 4 Mar, 1921, p. 285.

²⁴ Philip Webb (1935), p. 129.

²⁵ Philip Webb, p. 191.

²⁶ Philip Webb, p. 122.

²⁷ Journal of the Society of Arts (14 Feb., 1890), p. 272.

one finds, for example, Lethaby's mention in 1901, among the practical points of Morris' life and teaching that one should not force the limits of the medium [the material] nor for that matter, the methods of assembly or construction.²⁸ This relates to Lethaby's caution about distorting materials into inappropriate shapes. In the case of Philip Webb one can observe numerous instances either where Lethaby acknowledged that Webb had a similar point of view to his own on materials or where he used instances in Webb's practice to reinforce some point he was making about how architects should deal with materials. Several observations can be drawn from his writings about Webb from 1925. Lethaby used the example of the country house (begun 1863) that Webb built at Arisaig near Fort William, Scotland, to illustrate that Webb studied materials carefully and used those which were indigenous to the locality of the building site: "It is built of hard local stone, and here already [as in early work by Webb] is revealed the close study of material and characteristics of neighbourhood which was always Webb's starting point."²⁹

In the same writings, Lethaby listed as one of Webb's five "principles" of architecture that local materials and tradition should be drawn on.³⁰ A sense of propriety in the assemblage of various building materials was also a talent of Webb's to be admired, as Lethaby pointed out in Philip Webb via a quote by Webb's principal assistant, George Jack: "One remarkable quality was his keen perception of the proper ways in which all kinds of building materials should be used—it was a kind of instinct with him."³¹ Transitions between materials were smoothly handled in Webb's work, Lethaby wrote. He wrote of Webb's concept for "gradation of parts" or "shading" materials together so that transitions in scale

²⁸ "Morris as Workmaster," lecture at the Birmingham Municipal School of Art (20 Oct., 1901, Published as a pamphlet of the same name in 1902).

²⁹ As in Philip Webb, the 1925 book version, p. 86.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 102. Architects can sometimes be quite successful in capturing "local" qualities in their work. See for example "The Regionalism of H.H. Richardson," Lewis Mumford's essay published in Roots of Contemporary American Architecture (1972, orig. publ. in 1952, Lewis Mumford, ed.) Mumford's thoughts on Richardson's "Regionalism," which grew out of that architect's use of materials found in the region where his buildings were built were first published in Mumford's The South in Architecture (1941).

³¹ Philip Webb (1935), op.cit., p. 125. (Orig. 1925.)

between different-sized building units as well as between different substances were smoothly handled.³²

As to particular materials, Lethaby mentioned Webb's antipathy towards iron construction when that was associated with the disappearance of some other desirable architectural ingredient: "He felt the loss of local custom and endeavour and agreed with Morris when telling of some mere iron bridge atrocity near Kelmscott..."³³

But Lethaby also told of Webb's use of iron (in craft work), of his ability to draw out the basic characteristics of the material and creditably design in a material Lethaby thought much debased: "In these things in cast iron, as in all art he did, he seized on the essential character of material and craftsmanship... His cast iron grates brought back dignity and delicacy to a material that had been so vulnerable that redemption seemed hopeless."³⁴ Lethaby described Webb's use in 1890 of another modern material, concrete, in a more architectural, if invisible, application. Lethaby wrote that in that year Webb repaired the failing west tower of St. Mary's Church, East Knoyle, Wiltshire (near the country house, "Clouds" that Webb had built). The work, supervised by another Arts and Crafts architect, Detmar Blow, entailed leaving the outer "skin" of the tower alone but replacing its core (three to four feet thick) with new brick work and concrete.³⁵

The French architect, Viollet-le-Duc is mentioned by Lethaby in his early work in 1893 in connection with his discussion of the material lead. He saw in the teachings of Viollet support for his belief that a careful study of how one's architectural predecessors used building materials would be of advantage in his own time: "...we are a little too apt to think overmuch of the perfection of our modern methods while we are too little careful to learn the experience acquired by our forefathers."³⁶ In Lethaby's sketchbooks are early indications (see his sketchbooks at Barnstaple, for example) of his awareness of the

³² Ibid., p. 134.

³³ Ibid., p. 129.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 191.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

³⁶ Leadwork, op.cit., p. 36.

teachings and architectural activities of Viollet-le-Duc. There are other early references to Viollet-le-Duc in addition to the 1893 book Leadwork in Lethaby's writings as well as in private letters.³⁷ Without making an exhaustive comparison of the two men's views on materials in architecture, one can note some influence of the French architect on Lethaby on this subject. Peter Collins, in his history of concrete, maintained that Viollet-le-Duc's favorite expression (in harmony with Lethaby's thinking) was: "A few architects, conserving a certain independence of character, and wishing to stick to principles, become constructors: that is to say, they attempted to give each material employed the forms commanded by its nature."³⁸

Lethaby must also have noticed Viollet-le-Duc's "passionate defense of iron in architecture" as Nikolaus Pevsner described it, appearing in the first volume of Entretiens (originally published in 1863).³⁹ Lecture X in this volume referred to the use of iron for an assembly hall for two thousand people. Lethaby could have seen much more about the use of iron in architecture in Volume II wherein, according to Pevsner, Viollet-le-Duc wrote of "undisguised supporting iron and vaulting-ribs of iron..." floridly decorated however.⁴⁰

Attitude Toward Traditional Architectural Building Materials—Masonry

For the purpose of discussing Lethaby's views on specific materials it is convenient to make a divide between the "new" materials associated with the coming of the Industrial Age (iron and concrete in particular) and those older, "more traditional," ones such as stone, bricks and wood. Slightly different

³⁷ See, for example "The Builder's Art and the Craftsman" in Architecture: A Profession or an Art? (R.N. Shaw and T.G. Jackson, editors, 1892), p. 157.

³⁸ Quoted on p. 160 of Concrete, op.cit., by Peter Collins, 1959. The quote comes from Volume II of Viollet's Entretiens, published in 1872 but actually starting to appear in pieces about 1866. Entretiens was published in English in 1875 and 1881 in the United States and 1877 and 1881 in England. H.R. Hitchcock, from whom this last piece of information is drawn (Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 1971 printing, p. 607) does not say whether the two U.S. publ. dates and the two English ones repeat the sequential publications of Viollet's Volume I and II or are, rather, two editions of both (or what). Lethaby could have read this work by Viollet, without bothering to translate from French, as early as age 18.

³⁹ Pioneers of Modern Design (1975 ed.), p. 137.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 138.

issues emerge, as one looks at Lethaby's attitudes toward the various materials in each group. For so confirmed an Arts and Crafts architect, acceptance is a major issue in his attitude towards the newer materials where it is not with the traditional group. Several of the more traditional materials (stone, brick, tile, etc.) might be among those grouped under his heading "masonry arts." In Lethaby's 1921 series "Modernism and Design," he presented some of his views on the use of materials of this group. One should, for example, experiment more, as with brick patterns.⁴¹ Careful analysis of the potential of brick and tile should be made, as he mentioned in a comment related to the architectural education process: "Each building student ought to set to analyze out for himself and putting down in his notebook the combinations that may be got out of ordinary bricks and tiles."⁴² Some existing building elements in the "brick" family, he felt, had not been utilized as extensively as they might: "There are many brick-like elements which have hardly been brought into full building use—flat roof tiles, half-round ridges, pantiles, ordinary large paving squares, the small common pipes, the new box-bricks, etc."⁴³

Lethaby suggested, by example, that roofing pantiles could be used as a projecting masonry course in a wall to "relieve a large area of plastering or 'rough cast.'"⁴⁴ In regard to stone moulding, in the same 1921 series, he urged the designer to respect the material—to remember that it was not just lines on a drawing board.⁴⁵ In designing moulding one should respect the form of the natural pieces of stone to avoid cutting "to waste."⁴⁶ One should be aware that there were correct and incorrect usages for marble, for example, which he categorized as special material.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Part IV: "French and English Education," The Builder, 1 April, 1921, p. 409.

⁴² Part V: "Mere Designing," The Builder, 6 May, 1921, p. 501.

⁴³ Part IX: "Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture," The Builder, 2 Sept., 1921, p. 288.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Part VIII: "The Mystery of Mouldings," of the "Modernism and Design" series, The Builder, 5 Aug., 1921, p. 165.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 166.

⁴⁷ Part XI: "Function, Finish and Fitness," of "Modernism and Design," The Builder (4 Nov., 1921), p. 608.

Wood

For Lethaby, wooden architecture had not lost its potency, even by 1921. In the section on carpentry in “Modernism and Design” he told of a sketch he saw by Dürer (in a study book of Dürer’s in the British Museum) for an architectural experiment—a roof design involving a system of bracketing and trusses: “On these tie beams [part of Dürer’s system] was built quite a forest of timbering. Such things of wood are as delightful and imagination-moving as the things of masonry.”⁴⁸ Continuing in the section on carpentry he showed, in comments about roofing how his inclination toward simplification might be applied to woodworking: “There is no need to plane and niddle the timbers all over; often this is to spend effort and substance for less than naught. Occasionally, at least, sawn timber left plain or whitewashed will be more impressive and ‘beautiful.’”⁴⁹

An interesting example of letting the construction process show through in the finished work was provided in further comments on wood used as plaster grounds in ceilings. Lethaby’s idea was to break up the expanse of plastered surface by allowing the wood grounds to show through, flush with the plaster and paint them.⁵⁰ In a series in The Builder three years earlier (“A National Architecture,” 1918) in the section entitled “Modern Materials and Methods,” he wrote enthusiastically, recalling a stay in Switzerland, about the success of ordinary deal timber (lumber) as a finished interior surface: “...I have lived in Switzerland, in a room lined with fir—walls, ceiling, and floor—just a clean deal box, and I found it delightful. If the surface is left to itself, it soon goes a nice colour...” A defense of pine followed: “There was some vulgarity in our use of varnished ‘pitch pine’ which made the look of it impossible for a time. The wood itself is rather fine, however...” Using contemporary sawn lumber, one should not, he

⁴⁸ Part IX: “Building Commonplaces...,” *op.cit.*, The Builder, 2 Sept., 192), p. 289. In some notes for lectures on materials (in twelve parts) at Barnstaple, Lethaby praised another master from the past, the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius, for having written an excellent essay on building timbers. (n.d.; no page numbers).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

added attempt to imitate the carpentry of other ages: “The one impossible thing is the compromise to try to make little machine sawn stuff simulate old carpentry: ‘hammer-beams’ and all that!”⁵¹

Plaster

Plaster was another traditional material that Lethaby commented upon. In the early essay “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman” (1892), the commentary is nostalgic as Lethaby finds present methods wanting by comparison to old work:

In the eastern plasterwork repairs on out-of-the way cottages still clumsily match the deft patterns—work which after being perfected by the use of hundreds of years, is now done no longer. By careful enquiry you may find an old workman who remembers seeing it done when young, who can describe the toils and knows the names of the patterns “tortoise shell,” “square pricking,” and the rest. He will add that the modern plaster is quite unfit for work of this sort; the old material was washed, beaten, stirred, and tested so carefully, and for so long a time, that when laid it was, my informant said, “as tough as leather.”⁵²

One should not give up on plaster as an architectural material however. Much later, in 1918, he wrote, in reaction to modern built-up forms in plaster, that it was not necessarily an “evil sham”: “of course I am thinking of plastering as a sort of great coat—we don’t want ‘features’ in cement.” He related that he had seen “excellent modern experiments” in plasterwork in Germany, presumably eschewing the flowered approach just mentioned.⁵³ Still later (1921) Lethaby wrote that architects should not scorn stucco and limewashes. He wrote enthusiastically of a recent domestic application using plaster that he had encountered. The results had pleased him: “A house in this village [Rochester] has recently been plastered by some little builder who cared; the material had much crushed granite mixed in and it was finished with a rough face: particles of granite which sparkle in the light make it pleasant to look on.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Last three quotes from Part IV: “Modern Materials and Methods,” *op.cit.*, The Builder, 25 Oct., 1918, p. 262.

⁵² As found in Architecture: A Profession or an Art? (1892), *op.cit.*, p. 158.

⁵³ Last two quotes from “Modern Materials and Methods” Part IV of the article series “A National Architecture,” The Builder, 25 Oct., 1918, p. 262.

⁵⁴ “Part IX: “Building Commonplaces...,” *op. cit.*, The Builder, 2 Sept., 1921, p.289.

Lead

Lead was the only material to which Lethaby devoted an entire book. Many of his most interesting observations on this material can be found in this early work, Leadwork (1893). In his essay of the previous year, however (“The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman”) Lethaby wrote of the material’s distinguished past and of the sad lot that had befallen it in his own day: “Plumbing, now a term almost of derision was once, Viollet-le-Duc tells us, akin to the goldsmith’s art, as the goldsmith’s art was when the greatest painters were goldsmiths.”⁵⁵ He mentioned the noteworthy past developments in English architecture of lead pipe heads which surpassed, he said, contemporary work “stamped out by the surveyor-architect who now specifies a number from a trade catalog.”⁵⁶

In Leadwork, Lethaby reiterated that current work in lead was inferior to that of the past: “Leadworking as an art for the expression of beauty through material, with this ancestry of nearly two thousand years of beautiful workmanship behind it here in England has in the present century been entirely killed out.” He had pointed out at the beginning of the book how he intended to example of the past, in leadworking, to help improve the present state of affairs: “It is intended by pointing out the characteristics and methods of the art of leadworking in the past to show its possibilities for us, and for the future. A picture of what has been done is the best means of coming to a view of what may again be done.”⁵⁷

In this same book Lethaby singled out some existing applications of leadwork to attack a general vice in the usage of materials—dishonesty in presentation. Writing of the use of lead for objects in some gardens in Derbyshire: “All of these are painted and some covered with stone dust to imitate stone, a gratuitous insult to lead which will turn to a delicate grey if left to its own devices.” Similarly, the Gate Lions (smaller set) at Syon House near London are criticized: “...they are unfortunately newly painted and sanded to look like stone, and as the tail sticks out in a way utterly impossible for anything but metal

⁵⁵ As found in Architecture a Profession or an Art?, *op.cit.*, pp. 157-158. This may be a rare, if indirect, favorable reference to art in the Renaissance. Lethaby may have in mind Brunelleschi and Cellini who were goldsmiths before attaining greater fame as architect and sculptor respectively.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p 157.

⁵⁷ Last two quotes from Leadwork, *op.cit.*, p. 146 and p. 2.

it makes it entirely absurd. There is a plague of paint over old work, which should be gilt or let alone.’⁵⁸

Lethaby was complimentary of the lead covering on the National Gallery (London)—“very well and successfully done of its kind”—although the National Gallery itself, to Lethaby’s “style”-sensitive eyes was described as: “...one of the last of the old scholarly dead language sort we call classic.” He also gave examples of how one material, lead, is much more appropriate for a particular purpose than another, as in the instance of drainpipes. The force of his argument is diminished some by the effects of Lethaby’s preference for “simplicity” which for some reason was thought attainable in lead fittings but not in cast iron counterparts: “The material has an appropriateness for this purpose that cast iron cannot pretend to; a simple square box of lead and round pipe is much to be preferred to fussy things in cast iron, they will not require painting, nor do they fill the drains with rust...”⁵⁹

Attitude Towards Newer Building Materials—Iron and Steel

Preceding Lethaby’s study of lead, early among his published writings was the one around 1889 for a material coming into wide usage much more recently—cast iron. This and other materials brought into use (or more widely used) as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution received Lethaby’s thoughtful attention as well. Lethaby’s open attitude towards these newer materials has been of greater interest to later historians than say, his attitude about brick. One instance of this is found in John Gloag’s A History of Cast Iron in Architecture (1948). The book is dedicated to Lethaby and reads: “Dedicated to the memory of William Richard Lethaby who, more than any other writer and architect of his time, appreciated the influence of industrial materials upon architectural design.”⁶⁰ Some of Lethaby’s most interesting comments about cast iron can be found in two essays written around the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century—“Of Cast Iron,” included in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Catalog of 1889 and another work of similar title, “Cast Iron and its Treatment for Artistic Purposes,”

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 106 and p. 122. Exactly why gilt is an acceptable alternative finish to “material while paint is not, is not explained.

⁵⁹ Remaining quotes in this paragraph from Leadwork, op.cit., p. 35 and p. 146.

⁶⁰ As quoted in Gloag, op.cit., p. 47.

appearing the next year in the Journal of the Society of Art. In the earlier of the two Lethaby lamented the way cast iron, like lead, has been used in recent times but indicated that the problem did not lie with some inherent undesirable quality of the material itself as Ruskin had claimed:

Cast iron is nearly our humblest material, and with associations less than all artistic, for it has been almost hopelessly vulgarized in the present century, so much so, that Mr. Ruskin, with his fearless use of paradox to shock on into thought has laid it down that cast iron is an artistic solecism, impossible for architectural service now, or at any time. And yet, although we can never claim for iron the beauty of bronze, it is in some degree a parallel material, and has been used with appreciation.⁶¹

This is one of Lethaby's rare overt breaks with Ruskin. In another similar passage with a heightened moralizing tenor Lethaby linked the misuse of iron to national malfeasance: "Casting in iron has been so abased and abused that it is almost difficult to believe that the metal has something to offer to the arts. At no other time and in no other country would a national staple commodity have been so degraded."⁶²

The 1889 article contains specific pieces of advice as to how things might be improved. If one planned to make something in cast iron the design should be "thought out through the material and its traditional methods." If the design was to include ornament, this should be modeled, not carved, as is, Lethaby said, the usual case now. Wood carving, he continued, was essentially unfit "to give the soft suggestive relief required both by the nature of the sand mould into which it [the iron] is impressed and the crystalline structure of the metal when cast." Since Lethaby was concerned about the brittleness of cast iron he argued that a surface produced in such a material could have intricate decoration only if it was in low relief—small in thickness as compared to the base so that the ornament could not be broken off easily. Surfaces, when possible, should be left as they came from casting, without painting them or otherwise covering them.⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 55.

⁶³ As quoted in Gloag, A History of Cast Iron..., *op.cit.*, pp. 54-55.

Lethaby also discussed the question of rust in cast iron: “The question of rust is a difficult one, the oxide not being an added beauty like the patina acquired by bronze...” Protective painting was the recommended solution, the colors to be tints of black through gray. Gilding was also unacceptable and the red paint currently in wide use was panned energetically: “...our almost universal Indian red is a very bad choice, a hot coarse colour, you must see it, and be irritated, and it is surely the only colour that gets worse as it bleaches in the sun.” Ideally, Lethaby wrote, cast iron work (for railings, fences, and the like) should be honest about the method of construction, simplicity, as in leadwork, being another important virtue:

It must be understood that cast iron should be merely a flat latticelike design, obviously cast in panels, or plain post and rail construction with cast uprights and terminal knobs tenoned into rails, so that there is no doubt of straight forward unaffected fitting. The British Museum screen may be taken to instance how ample ability will not redeem false principles of design: the construction is not clear, nor are the forms sufficiently simple, the result being only a high order of common-place grandeur.⁶⁴

More positive than in the instance of the British Museum, Lethaby praised the cast iron railing and staircase balusters found on late eighteenth century houses for their clear unambivalent expression of the material employed and for other qualities: “Refined and thoroughly good of their kind, they never fail to please, and never of course, imitate wrought iron. The design is always direct, unpretentious and effortless...” Also, the railings on the verandas of buildings in the Piccadilly and Mayfair areas of London, unlike those found around the gardens of the Thames Embankment were practical, honest, true to the material:

...confessedly cast iron, and never without the characterizing dullness of the forms, so that they have no jutting members to be broken off, to expose a repulsive jagged fracture: The opposite of all these qualities may be found in the “expensive” looking railing on the Embankment enclosing the gardens, whose tiny fretted forms invite an experiment [to break off pieces] often successful.

Lampposts from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the “few of which have not been improved away from back streets,” showed “appropriate form” for objects of cast iron, Lethaby wrote. Other praised cast

⁶⁴ Quotes in this paragraph as taken from Gloag, *A History of Cast Iron*..., *op.cit.*, pp. 50-55.

iron objects ranged in size from the candelabras in some of the Pall Mall clubs to London and Waterloo Bridges (in London also).⁶⁵

In his article on cast iron from 1890, Lethaby did not see iron leading to new architecture, even though the iron-framed industrial mills of England from as far back as the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Crystal Palace of 1851 and the tall buildings built in Chicago (especially from the decade just ended) clearly indicated such a development. Perhaps Lethaby's own preferences precluded recognition then as he wrote: "I am not one of those who wish to see in iron a material for a new architecture, as it is called..."⁶⁶ Cast iron was not as good as timber and stone. Also in this article Lethaby, as in the essay from the previous year, complained about the current widespread misuse of cast iron, being particularly vexed since it is a natural resource (or rather can be made from natural resources) particularly abundant in Great Britain. Lethaby's expression of this is given in the quote below, along with another early statement about the potential of all materials to make a unique contribution in the world—even though one might rank the value higher or lower for each contribution:

Now this art of iron-founding has interested me because, on this hand, it is one of our vastest resources, national in its importance; and on the other hand, degraded and scorned, it has become a commonplace of late[?] to decry it; until, for the most part, it has become worthy of the disdain...All materials are alike, if not equally, vehicles for its Art's [?] expression; each one of which can give use something simple and alone, something without which the world suffers lack.⁶⁷

Lethaby's interest in the occult surfaces in the 1890 article also, as he described the "qualities" that have been associated with iron in the past and compared these with those which have been linked to other metals:

...there is a certain mysterious appeal in iron only surpassed probably by the gold of the poets with its red bloom: and so pure as to be "soft as wax;" barbarous, occult, and fateful.

⁶⁵ Quotes in this paragraph as taken from Gloag, A History of Cast Iron..., op.cit., pp. 50-51.

⁶⁶ "Cast Iron and its Treatment for Artistic Purposes," op.cit., p. 279.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Iron on the other hand, stands for strength, simplicity, even severity, and on its sinister side, for cruelty and terror. In the old oppoitionment [sp?] of the seven metals to the seven planets iron belongs to Mars, as gold to the sun and silver to the moon...⁶⁸

Continuing, Lethaby quoted from Chaucer—a description of an iron-pillared Temple of Mars, which showed something of how the great fourteenth century poet thought of the material:

Every pillar the temple to sustain
was ton-great, of iron bright and shene
There saw I first the dark imagining
Of felonie, and all the compassing.⁶⁹

Other romantic anecdotes about iron's past associations follow in the 1890 article. He mentioned iron's importance in an "Eastern" (Oriental?) story about "The City of Brass." "...an inscribed tablet of iron of China was suspended in front of the 'Terrible Tomb,' we feel that bronze or even gold would be an anti-climax." Lethaby also mentioned the occasion in the fourteenth century when a great Indian raja set up a great pillar (the Pillar of Delhi) at the "true center" of the world. The pillar, a great shaft of iron symbolized, Lethaby said, "undivided sovereignty over the world." The iron cross of Lombardy and that of Germany provide instances in which "...the mere name of the metal lends a mysterious and moving import of invincible sternness." The appropriateness of iron for certain sculptural representations can be found as far back as Pliny, Lethaby wrote. That author, he said, told of a certain statue of cast iron—the material chosen because it was thought appropriate to a depiction of the god Hercules, known for his strength.⁷⁰

In the article of 1890 Lethaby asserted that no material was to be considered intrinsically better suited for artistic purpose than another:

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 273.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Quotes in this paragraph from "Cast Iron and its Treatment for Artistic Purposes," *op.cit.*, pp. 273 and 274.

As our sensibility widens, and deepens, we shall find that not a given material—the whitest marble, or greenest bronze are [sic] necessarily artistic but the intellectual or intuitive grasp by which material and motive, texture and technique, are made to co-ordinate in one balanced result. And thus stern iron might offer, in the hands of a master, a material of great value in serious and commanding work...we might, perhaps, be allowed to recommend to the rising new school of English sculpture sometimes to think away from the, perhaps, petty prettiness of bronze, to think sometimes in iron.⁷¹

The previous excerpt would seem to countervail Ruskin's point of view that some materials, stone for example, are more the stuff of "true" architecture than say, cast iron. Lethaby did, however, implicitly admit to seeing a hierarchical relationship between various artistic disciplines, at least insofar as the materials define the disciplines. In the next passage in the article Lethaby noted: "Having once made this claim for iron to a place in serious art..." These words serve as an introduction to some further comments focusing on the widespread use of iron in everyday life. The metal's abundance, he concluded, has led to some rather banal applications:

Waiving this little possibility of the highest appeal, at selecting iron because of its commonness and powers of resistance, it has been treated as an art "not too great and good for human nature's daily food," but still an art real of its kind. By a careful selection of the focus and treatment suited to the structure and texture of the material, and its application to commonplace needs, the charms of fitness and honest simplicity have been given to it, and by accepting the comparative valuelessness of the metal, it has been used as the vehicle for slight thoughts and slighter execution.⁷²

Using the example of some cast iron animals (dogs) at the Museum of Mines, Lethaby showed also in 1890 his interest in the idea that a work would express its means of construction: "...one of these is especially interesting, for it is shown as it came from the mould, with seams, jets, and supports not cut away nor any surface chasings." On the question of what forms may legitimately be produced in iron, Lethaby wrote that, where depicting of objects is concerned, he could not advocate the direct imitation of nature in cast iron but that "a sign of nature within the limits of the material" was allowable. Practical

⁷¹ "Cast Iron and its Treatment for Artistic Purposes," *op.cit.*, p. 274.

⁷² Last two quotes from "Cast Iron and its Treatment for Artistic Purposes," *op.cit.*, p. 274. Regarding the contemporary use of iron in more "serious" art, sculpture, for example, Lethaby cited the example of Alfred Stevens ("the greatest of our designer sculptors", whose cast iron lions ("by far the most popular work of modern sculpture") at the British Museum he said prompted many other admiring artists to obtain casts. (Ibid.)

considerations were also touched upon. Regarding the issue of protection from oxidation, Lethaby plainly wished that the material could be left in its natural state: "...rust is without any doubt the natural treatment." He even advocated letting the material rust sometimes and speculates on whether iron could acquire a weather-coat. He observed that galvanizing was one acceptable solution to the problem of arresting rust, another that one could paint the metal some "appropriate" color.⁷³

A few other comments by Lethaby on cast iron made in publications of the 1890s are worth noting. The next year, in Leadwork, Lethaby again criticized contemporary work in cast iron, characterizing it as "fussy."⁷⁴ Bridges in 1890s presented opportunities for the misapplication of the metal, he wrote in "Of Beautiful Cities" (1896). In describing his proposal for cutting a new avenue from Waterloo Bridge to the British Museum, he stressed the need to keep traffic on the thoroughfare light. The existing Waterloo Bridge, he said, would not be able to accommodate a large volume and that would lead to "the substitution for it of some monstrosity of rolled steel and red paint."⁷⁵ Here, along with a color Lethaby disliked for the painting of metal, the newer material steel rather than cast iron is the potential offender but the concerns would have been the same for Lethaby, had the bridge been designed for construction in cast iron.

In the series "A National Architecture" written in The Builder near the end of World War I, one finds later comments about the use of iron (and steel) in architecture. In a subsection of the series, "Modern Materials and Methods" (1918), he linked building in iron and steel to machinery and to airplanes; the latter association predates by at least a year Corbusier's well-known couplings of modern architecture with steamships, airplanes, and motor cars:

This kind of construction needs smartness: it must be exquisitely neat and precise, like a motor[car?] or airplane—like all machinery in fact. I do not understand why there is a

⁷³ Quotations in this paragraph from "Cast Iron and its Treatment for Artistic Purposes," op.cit., pp. 274, 280-281 and 284. To a degree his preferences were to be made viable in the twentieth century with the introduction of Cor-ten and other processes (for steel) which allowed the omission of added protective coverings.

⁷⁴ Leadwork, p.3.

⁷⁵ As publ. in Art and Life.... op. cit. (1896), p. 107.

tradition of finish and elegance in making machinery itself, from agricultural implements up to great engines, yet in bridges and stations we are supposed to put up with the most brutal and insolent neglect.⁷⁶

Another passage shows Lethaby's enthusiasm at the time for steel and iron utilitarian objects of all types.

His description of some railway structure is anthropomorphic in part. He wrote of his interest in:

...many of the all-metal constructions which are now becoming so common—station roofs, bridges, tall lamp and signal standards of lattice work, and supports for over-head gear, some of the latter which I saw the other day, on the railway near Clapham Junction, rise on slanting legs, straddle over the line and thrust out long necks beyond like iron giraffes: they are rather fearless, but they are full of the sort of life we live now in the age of airplanes.⁷⁷

Comments about specific applications for iron and steel including those on cast iron are found in another subsection of "A National Architecture" entitled "Wall, Arches, and Vaults." Thinking of new applications for the material Lethaby suggested that iron could be used as permanent centering for vaults and/or cast iron ribs; bolted sections could be employed.⁷⁸ He appears to have had in mind in these suggestions some sort of hybrid construction where metal is utilized to facilitate a stone structure. The suggestions, if evaluated for their novelty, seems peculiarly anachronistic if one thinks of such cast iron frame churches as Rickman's at Liverpool, over a hundred years earlier. By 1918, Lethaby was ready, as the next passage shows, to accept the external appearance of steel and iron in storefronts. Cast iron storefronts had been around for about three-quarters of a century by then (see the work of James Bogardus, for instance) so Lethaby's comments are more interesting as evidence of the accommodation

⁷⁶ Part IV of "A National Architecture," 25 Oct., 1918, p. 262. Le Corbusier's famous Vers Une Architecture in 1923, with the analogies to transportation devices mentioned, is made up of articles which had appeared earlier in L'Esprit Nouveau (see Reyner Banham's Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (1960) so Vers Une Architecture did not contain Corbusier's first public expression of these ideas. However, the first issue of L'Esprit Nouveau appeared almost a year after the article by Lethaby just cited—that is, on October 15, 1920. Le Corbusier may have put forth the analogy in print somewhere else, earlier, but it does not seem too likely; he did not publish that much before writing in the magazine L'Esprit...

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 261-262.

⁷⁸ Part VI, 8 Nov., 1918, p. 299.

an Arts and Crafts theorist is willing to make with the “modern” materials and for his rejection of proportions for architectural elements not based on the structural characteristics of metal:

It should be a delightful problem to devise a reasonable shop front, direct and smart, in metal construction. It is a commonplace of aesthetic taste on this shop problem, that supports should not only be sufficient for their work, but must look sufficient also.

This taste-talk has queered the whole problem, for realities are not to be altered into appearances. If the support is sufficient it will come to look so when we are experienced in this sort of construction—that is all. What is really the matter is not the apparent slightness of the supports, but the pretence and boggling.⁷⁹

The same 1918 series in The Builder also contains Lethaby’s advice on the best colors to paint structural work of steel and iron—grey was acceptable (anything in fact from black to white) or “a thin hard copper green,” or a “shiny aluminum paint.”⁸⁰ No reasons are given for these preferences.

Later, near the beginning of the 1920’s Lethaby acknowledged a shift in his position as to the acceptability of iron (and metal generally) for architecture, although the change in position is made to seem more marked than a look at his previous discussion of the subject (in the 1890s) would reveal:

The first little special study of a material I ever made was of cast-iron; I thought it was a low un-architectural stuff, but seeing that some applications and treatments were better than others, it were [sic?] well that it should be rightly understood. I have come to think that it is an excellent building material which we should adopt without shame.⁸¹

Looking back in time, he commented in the same article that the best London work in cast iron had been done from 1789 to 1840, in a variety of applications including balconies and railways. The large grilles at Albert Hall (built 1867-1871) are termed the “best very recent work.”⁸² An interesting remark, for any but the most conscientious classicist (which Lethaby certainly was not) is also to be found, this to the effect that cast iron could be used for lintels as an alternative to stone. A little more progressive,

⁷⁹ Ibid., Part IV: “Modern Materials and Methods,” 25 Oct., 1918, op.cit., p. 262.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Part IX: “Building Commonplaces...,” op.cit., The Builder, 2 Sept., 1921, p. 289.

⁸² Ibid.

perhaps, because of the feature of a more unavoidable visibility, is his comment approving the use of cast iron lattice forms (sashes) for glazing—even for “monumental” buildings.⁸³ One should bear in mind that English monumental buildings in Lethaby’s time (structures associated with the government, etc., with requisite features reflecting ‘permanence,’ tradition,’ etc.) seem to be often among the most conservatively treated and the architectural philosophy reflected in them tended toward the more conservative, if not reactionary side of current architectural design parameters. Making a distinction between iron and steel, Lethaby also noted that the Germans were using steel, as if to say that the British ought to use this product more fully.⁸⁴ In a later remark (1925) on steel construction, Lethaby related it to carpentry—no doubt because post and lintel frame construction as well as truss design are approached similarly for both materials: “There is a natural affinity between carpentry and steel construction and the engineer of today follows, in great part, the carpenter’s experiments in the use of beams, braces, and trusses.”⁸⁵

Writings About Concrete

Concrete, although a form of it was used in the ancient world, has been put into much greater use in modern times at a time later, for the most part, than cast iron. The chronology of concrete’s progression into wide use building construction more closely parallels that of steel. Concrete, like steel, did come into extensive use in architecture, during Lethaby’s lifetime. Here, the focus will first be on a discussion of Lethaby’s use of the material in his built work.

In the case of concrete, most of the more interesting of Lethaby’s published thoughts on the material post-date by at least a decade, the instances of its use in his own work. The eminent Norman Shaw, Lethaby’s employer in the 1880’s, had been at the forefront among English architects who experimented with concrete in buildings. Shaw, no doubt, was of some influence on Lethaby in regard to

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 288. An earlier example of steel use in Britain was the structural frame of Selfridge’s Department Store, Oxford Street, London, from 1907.

⁸⁵ “The Engineer’s Art,” *Architecture*, July, 1925, p. 120.

using concrete. Lethaby used the material in incidental ways in several of his own works of the 1890s after leaving Shaw's office and then in a much more important context at the beginning of the twentieth century. Details of Lethaby's use of concrete in specific works will also follow.

Besides setting an example for Lethaby in his work, there is the letter Shaw wrote Lethaby in 1900, a year before Lethaby began his concrete church at Brockhampton, in which Shaw advocated the use of reinforced concrete.⁸⁶ A year after that, Lethaby wrote an article in the Architectural Review (June 1902) about J.F. Bentley's recently completed Westminster Cathedral. Singled out for praise by Lethaby were the concrete vaulting of the aisles, and the church's general "large use of concrete."⁸⁷

In Architecture (1911), Lethaby seems to have first begun to address the issue of concrete in his architectural writings. In one passage he suggested that we could learn from the ancient Romans about using concrete and he linked the material as used by them to modern reinforced concrete: "Modern armoured concrete is only a higher power of the Roman system of construction."⁸⁸ He continued, suggesting that concrete be regarded as a material suitable for works of art and one with potentially wide usage in architecture: "If we could sweep away our fear that it is an inartistic material, and boldly build a railway station, a museum, or a cathedral..."⁸⁹ Peter Collins, in Concrete (1959), reported on a lecture Lethaby had given two years later (1913) to the Northern Polytechnical Institute entitled "The Architectural Treatment of Reinforced Concrete." Its plastic nature should be recognized, Lethaby said

⁸⁶ This letter was cited by Lethaby in his book, Philip Webb (1935), p. 77. Orig., articles he wrote on Webb in The Builder of 1925. In Lethaby's church at Brockhampton, however, the concrete was not reinforced.

⁸⁷ As quoted in Winefride de L'Hôpital's monograph, Westminster Cathedral and its Architect (1919), pp. 309-310.

⁸⁸ Op.cit., 1955 ed., p. 192.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Among Lethaby's undated lecture notes at Barnstaple are some discussing concrete. These include some observations about concrete vaults and webbing and some comments about historical uses of concrete. In these notes he cited the Parthenon and Hadrian's Villa as ancient examples of un-reinforced concrete and the Baths of Diocletian and the Basilica Nova as Roman examples of concrete with some form of reinforcing. What Lethaby pointed out in these latter instances in an analogy to modern metal reinforcing is that in the ancient work, ribs were already in place before the wet concrete was added to the vault form. These ribs, he said, acted as a hard skeleton, holding up the still wet concrete, preventing its excessive flow and helping it to retain moisture while setting.

then and he concluded, therefore, that it was not suitable for forming sharp edges.⁹⁰ Collins summarized the “ABC’s” for design in concrete that Lethaby offered in the lecture:

- A) The material must be perfected so that there is a good surface free of cracks.
- B) The design using concrete should be appropriate to the matter with which it deals. (This point, somewhat nebulous, is not explained further by Collins).
- C) Any additional finish on the surface should be in harmony with the material and the structure.⁹¹

Related to this last point, Lethaby also said in the 1913 lecture that concrete should be covered up.

Comments in later years show Lethaby’s concern for unsightly surface cracking and that may be the basis for this caveat. The concrete used in his church at Brockhampton was left exposed (when viewed from the interior) however. The quality of labor involved in concrete construction also concerned Lethaby. In the 1913 lecture, Lethaby is reported by Collins to have characterized concrete work as calling for a very large supply of the “commonest labour.” No happy artisans here—only the toil of “shoveling that dreadful liquid cement...driven by gangers with stop-watches.”⁹²

Five years later, concrete is discussed in Lethaby’s series of articles called “A National Architecture.” One remark stressed concrete’s historical roots and welcomed the revived employment of the kind of structural systems with which he saw concrete associated: “Concrete seems to be a poor building material, but it brings back on of the fundamental methods of construction—that of continuous aggregation, a method which, while the material was mud, first produced vaulted and domical buildings, a great class of structures which are the natural outcome of such plastic materials.” Concrete might act as a replacement for more traditional materials for some architectural uses and could even improve architecture: “...roofs of cylindrical, conical, domical or other forms...taking the place of the poor wood and slate covering we have been accustomed to, open up large possibilities of more dignified and

⁹⁰ Concrete..., op.cit., p. 135. Later practice showed this concern to be unfounded.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 136.

⁹² The remainder of this material in this paragraph also obtained from Collins, Concrete..., op.cit., pp. 135-136.

interesting types of planning as well as more monumental super-structures.” Whatever architectural expression is given to concrete must be drawn from the material’s own characteristics: “Once having mastered the material and having produced a fairly even surface, we have to bring out what it can best do on its own merits and put away any attempt at imitating forms developed in stone and brick building.”⁹³

What were some of the factors to be considered in concrete construction? As Lethaby said in 1913, work in concrete should have simple edges and rounded forms. Some way had to be found to stop cracking. The problem also applied to cement floors: “Our continued use of materials like mosaic and cement floors in such a way that rivers of cracks wander over them after a few years is somewhat astonishing.” With concrete, however, Lethaby wrote that one could take more advantage of curves and diagonal surfaces. The monolithic character of the material was an asset and Lethaby found “there is surely something exciting in such a mode of building.” Again, though, Lethaby turned his attention to ultimately covering the concrete itself: “The surface could be finished with white and colour washes, plastering, painting, roughcast, sgraffito, marble-veneer, mosaic, glazed tiling and glazed terra-cotta applied in panels and even medallions.”⁹⁴

Curiously though, when Lethaby wrote about the built works he admired the most it appears that these were the ones most bare, although Lethaby must have thought they could be improved by the addition of some unornamented covering (such as some of those just mentioned):

I have preserved a catalogue of some concrete ‘fabric’ [factory] which illustrates works executed by the process. Some of them are naked and unashamed, while others are smothered with figments of so-called ‘architecture’...the unadorned ones show energy and experimental thinking, and so we cannot help being held by their interest. The adorned ones are nearly without exception sullen and stupid. Some are really repulsive in their foolish trappings...A few of these concrete structures, however, seem from the photographs to be excellent, almost exciting.⁹⁵

⁹³ Sources in this paragraph from Part IV: “Modern Material and Methods,” of the series “A National Architecture” in the The Builder, 25 Oct., 1918, p. 261.

⁹⁴ Ibid..

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Some of these works which he deemed “almost exciting” included two bridges (one over the Slanery, near Wexford and the other over the Tweed at Stobo), some sheds with widely spaced curved roofs, a large circular tank with flat domical top, a long row of warehouses at Salford, and several circular water towers “raised high on posts.”⁹⁶ Later in the “National Architecture” series, Lethaby brought up concrete in the section entitled “Walls, Arches and Vaults.” There he suggested an improved vaulting system wherein the cells do not rest horizontally on the transverse arches but instead follow the curve of the arches from springline to crown. The results, he wrote would be a kind of concrete vaulting having large “corrugations.”⁹⁷ In a later series in The Builder (“Modernism and Design,” 1921), Lethaby drew a series of hypothetical buildings to illustrate material usage. Concrete, used in a rather conservative manner considering the times, was suggested for use in two of the examples. One showed a tower with sloping roof to be done in concrete and the second, a building, described in the following excerpt, used the material more extensively and utilized Lethaby’s “corrugation” principle in plan: “...concrete was taken as the material. I have thought that, as a corrugated form...[it would be]...self-buttressing and as a plastic material [it] may well be cast into curved shapes...”⁹⁸

Opinions on Other “Modern” Materials

Lethaby’s writings specifically about other building materials brought into use in more recent times are less easily found. In the “National Architecture” series asphalt is given an enthusiastic plug: “Asphalt makes permissible flat roofs, which in London should be of vast value, as making dozens of square miles of space available.”⁹⁹ This last quote may be more interesting for its reference to utilizing roof space through the construction of flat roofs. Lethaby was not the first to make this observation about the potential of flat roofs. He seems to have been among the first, if not the first, in England however.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Part VI: “Walls, Arches and Vaults,” The Builder, 8 Nov., 1918, p. 299. Lethaby had used this “corrugation” arrangement for the vaulting illustrated for the Liverpool Cathedral (competition entry, with others, 1902).

⁹⁸ Part II: “Positive Data,” in the series “Modernism and Design” in The Builder, 4 Feb., 1921, p. 156.

⁹⁹ Part IV: “Modern Material and Methods,” The Builder, op.cit., 25 Oct., 1918, p. 262.

Buildings of the Mediterranean cultures and those of the Indian sub-continent, for example have traditionally used flat roof surfaces as living areas. In modern western European architecture in the more northerly countries, the idea is closely associated with Le Corbusier—for example, the Dom-ino House project (1914), Citrohan House Project (1920), Unite d’Habitation (1945, Marseilles) but Adolph Loos was clearly exploiting the roof surfaces as living areas earlier than this in the Scheu House of 1912 (Vienna). Flat reinforced concrete roofs, presumably employing asphalt, were not unknown in Britain before Lethaby’s 1918 article series. Woods and Sellars had used them in several buildings in 1906, including a house, but Lethaby seems closer then to appreciating the large-scale advantages of the “living-roof” that Le Corbusier had foreseen than Woods and Sellars or even Loos.

Lethaby wrote favorably of other recently developed materials, including reference to asphalt again, in the 1918 article as well as the following: “Granolithic and other composition floors, and asphalt for covering vaults, box bricks, blue bricks, aluminium all seem to be admirable materials if they can be used in direct and unaffected ways. Avoid disguise and compromise.”¹⁰⁰ Plate glass too, should be boldly and frankly used.¹⁰¹ Eventually Lethaby accepted the various ‘new materials (concrete, steel, asphalt, aluminum, etc.) as not only appropriate for architecture but also for objects within an architectural work. In 1926, one finds the Arts and Crafts leader admitting that metal furnishings could be accepted: “Even metal furniture designed to do its job, produced to get the greatest value and convenience from the material, and proclaiming with clean paint and clean lines the nature of that material, would be a vast stride.”¹⁰²

Material Usage in Lethaby’s Own Work

Some notice should be taken of Lethaby’s use of building materials in his own work. This will help, in the case of the newer materials particularly, to show how willing he was to carry his theoretical views

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Galley-proof of Lethaby’s review of *Artifex: The Future of Craftsmanship* by John Gloag, 1926, contained in a letter of August 19, 1926 from Lethaby to Harry Peach (R.I.B.A. Library).

into practice. This avenue cannot be travelled very far, as Lethaby's career as a builder was far shorter than as an architectural writer. Only in the 1890s (and in the first few years of the twentieth century) can Lethaby be found both writing in some volume and pursuing an independent architectural practice. Lethaby's frequent use of traditional building materials was brought up previously, in the chapter on Ornament (Chapter VIII)—the attractive brick chimney flues, flint external wall patterns, plastering and marble fireplace at Avon Tyrell, the thatched roofing styles at Brockhampton, and the harled walls of Melsetter, for example.¹⁰³ Nothing more need be said here about Lethaby's use of traditional materials except to observe that some of those that he obviously must have come in close contact with in Shaw's employ do not seem to have been used much once he was on his own. One could count among these omissions, half-timbering, as is in Shaw's "Sunninghill" (1879-1880), which was in progress when Lethaby arrived at Shaw's and exterior tile wall surfacing as at Shaw's Greenaway House (1885, Hampstead) and at "Three Gables" (1881, Hampstead)—the latter two done while Lethaby worked at Shaw's.

As to materials brought into use via the Industrial Revolution, one can find Lethaby using iron in non-structural ways in his early Building News design competition entries. The "Lodge and Covered Entrance" published August 3, 1877, included a cast or wrought-iron gate and his designs for some fireplace equipment, published April 19, 1879, shows his design for a coalscuttle to be made of wrought iron. Once in Shaw's employ, projects using the newer materials were no doubt frequently encountered by Lethaby. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Lethaby was involved, in all likelihood, in the design of Shaw's Holy Trinity Church, Latimer Road (Hammersmith, London, c. 1885-1887) and in that for New Scotland Yard. The former included structural iron girders (probably owing little to Lethaby's

¹⁰³It may be that these omissions are just a function of Lethaby not getting a sufficient number of opportunities (or the right opportunities) in practicing as a principal. In addition to the marble fireplaces which are found in Lethaby's own work, there must have been plenty of these detailed for Shaw's works when Lethaby worked there. Specifically attributed to Lethaby is the drawing at the R.I.B.A. for a granite fireplace for Shaw's Flete House (c. 1878-82) in Devonshire (see Catalog of the Drawings Collection of the R.I.B.A., 1973, Jill Lever ed.)

involvement because of his lack of engineering training) and iron roof details; the latter utilized concrete chimney flues.¹⁰⁴

Beginning with Lethaby's first independent commission, Avon Tyrell (1891-1892) there is use of new industrial building materials. The drawings for the country house in the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection show steel "I" and "Z" shapes to be used at window heads. Visible in a 1974 visit to the building was a flat cellar ceiling of concrete which showed the marks of the shuttering but it has not been verified whether this concrete work dates from the building's beginning.¹⁰⁵ Neither concrete nor steel is visible anywhere at Avon Tyrell where patrons of the architectural art would be likely to view them. Brick with stone trim covers the building's elevations, with some horizontal wood siding used to cover parts of the exterior wall at the second level of the stable. Lethaby's next built work "the Hurst" (1893, now destroyed) in a suburb of Birmingham, showed the craftsman's emphasis, not the bounty of industrialization. Thin red Leicester bricks formed the external wall surface and handmade tiles, the roof.¹⁰⁶ A look at the materials Lethaby chose for his commission in the Orkney's, Melsetter House (1898-1902), reveals them to be traditional ones. The walls are of grey Orkney sandstone and green-grey heave Caithness (from the northern "mainland" of Scotland), slate was used for the roof slab.¹⁰⁷ As John Brandon-Jones described in 1957, the outer walls of Melsetter were "harled" and whitened, as was the custom in the area. Sandstone, pale red in color, was used for quoins and window trim. Massive sandstone fireplaces are found in the interior. Concrete was used also—as in the building's chapel, a freestanding rectilinear form apart of the main mass of the building but close-by and helping to define the courtyard space.

¹⁰⁴The relevant drawings for Holy Trinity Church are dated November 1, 1886.

¹⁰⁵ Author visited the building in 1974. Also noticeable during the visit to the cellar were several large pieces of structural steel, one an approximately ten-inch deep beam in place, about fifteen feet long, which apparently was serving to frame parts of the first floor. The seatings for these structural members appeared newer than the members themselves but possibly everything is from a later date.

¹⁰⁶Lawrence Weaver, describing the house in Small Country Houses of Today, Vol. I (1905), op.cit., wrote of the interior's exquisite marble mantelpiece and the fine plasterwork, p. 97.

¹⁰⁷"An Orkney Mansion; Threat to Melsetter House," The Times (London), Oct., 1949, author and page number n.a.

Lethaby's only design for a commercial building, the Eagle Insurance Company (1899-1900) in Birmingham used some steel and concrete also although it was, for the most part, covered up. The fact that the building was done in collaboration with Birmingham architect Joseph Lancaster Ball makes it difficult to decide to what extent exactly the choice of materials represents Lethaby's point of view although it is more likely that Lethaby was the "lead" architect and thus more in control of such decisions. The unglazed portions of the façade (the only important elevation as the structure sits with buildings abutting left and right) are faced with stone. An examination of the drawings at the R.I.B.A. show that the floors are of concrete, covered with other material. In some locations this covering was wood blocks while the main floor was intended to be covered either with mosaic or a "granolithic floor." David Martin in his thesis on Lethaby mentioned that there are also vaulted ceilings of concrete, although perhaps this is the underside of the concrete floors previously mentioned.¹⁰⁸ A drawing at the R.I.B.A. also shows metal shapes (probably steel, although the specifications were not seen) for the floor supports (6" deep with 3" flanges). These members had a cross section like an American steel "I" beam and were indicated as G20 6x3 16#/FT. @ 3'-0 O.C. Heavier members were to be achieved with a built-up section and designated G3C4 18x10 (i.e. 18" deep with a 10" wide flange) with a weight of 134.5#/FT. There was also a skylight with a steel frame indicated. Structural members were to be fireproofed and the roof was to be of asphalt.

At Lethaby's church (All Saints, at Brockhampton, built 1901-1902) his interest in utilizing local, traditional building materials is again put into practice, although here this is combined with a willingness to use concrete in a more manifest way than previously. The nave, chancel and transept vaults were built of concrete that was left exposed on the interior. Perhaps growing out of the same values which led Lethaby to admire cast iron work that showed the seams created during production was the decision to allow the interior surface of the concrete vaulting to frankly show the marks of the stripped form boards. It appears that no modern architect had used structural concrete in such an unabashed way in a type of building falling, unlike mill buildings and greenhouse for example, within the traditional definition of

¹⁰⁸ 1957 unpublished Bachelor's thesis "The Architecture of W.R. Lethaby" by David S. Martin, Department of Architecture, Manchester University, p. 96.

architecture. Lethaby's concrete vaults, it should be noted however, were un-reinforced, so the usage of the material here shows a more conservative attitude technologically about concrete than it does aesthetically.

A later section of this chapter, presenting a review of the development of concrete for building use in modern times, will aid in understanding the contribution Lethaby made at Brockhampton. The building apparently was also provided with an up-to-date heating system, as an article in the local newspaper written at the time of the laying of the church's foundation stone pointed out. The following excerpts from that 1901 article also described the principal materials used, calling attention to their "localness;" note is taken of the use of concrete as well:

Local stone only is being used in its [the church's] construction...red sandstone from the Caplar quarry and green stone from the Falcon, both of which are on the Brockhampton estate.

The chancel and transept will be vaulted in concrete, and the roof will be stone principals with oak purlins. Tiles or stone will be laid in the aisle and oak boarding under the seats.¹⁰⁹

Since the financial benefactor of the new church was the owner of the estate on which the quarries which provided the stone were located (as well as the church site itself), Lethaby's preference for the use of local materials and the estate owner's probable concern for cost must have merged comfortably. Later, at the church's opening in 1902, the newspaper again reminded the reader of the immediate provenance of the building's stone and woodwork: "...[the] stone used has been obtained from the local quarries, and as far as possible all the interior fittings, which are of oak, were supplied from Herefordshire trees."¹¹⁰

An examination of the drawings and specifications for the church kept in the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection in London give further information about the materials intended for use in the Brockhampton church and their integration into the design. The concrete vaults were to span a nave eighteen feet wide

¹⁰⁹“A New Parish Church for Brockhampton,” Ross Gazette, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, 27 June, 1901, pp. 4. (author's name n.a.)

¹¹⁰“Opening of Brockhampton Church,” Ross Gazette, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, 23 Oct., 1902, p. 3, col. 4. (author's name n.a.)

and twenty-one feet six inches from floor to the top of pointed cross-section (interior dimension). Portland cement, with a tensile strength of three-hundred-fifty pounds per square inch was to be used.¹¹¹ The large aggregate (three-quarters of an inch to two inches in diameter) was to be a local product also, specified on the plans as “wastestone, from the estate quarry.” Above the concrete was to be three inches of coke breeze concrete which was to receive the one-inch thick thatch exterior covering. The church’s foundations were also to be of concrete and the chancel floor was to be a seven-inch corner slab (later changed to eleven inches thick).¹¹² Attending the instructions about the floor slab is a somewhat perplexing note about steel joists. Since a room was built below the chancel space, perhaps there was a thought to frame over this room with joists; no other indication of structural metal seems to be included in the design documents except for some “hoop iron” to bond roof timbers to masonry walls. The plan details the warm-air heating and ventilating system as one with air entering the interior spaces high up and extracted at floor level. The wall flues, heating coils and heating chambers (including one under the cellar) are shown also. Lethaby was progressive enough to adopt a central heating system, which, though already seeing some use in the nineteenth century, is even now far from universally employed in England.

Carpentry, the specifications indicate, was to be oak unless otherwise noted. An exception to this, departing from Lethaby’s regionalist dicta involved the calling for specifications for fir, which was to come from the Baltic—“the best Danzig, Riga or Memel yellow fir.”¹¹³ Roof purlins were to be six by eight inch members with one and one-half-inch by seven-inch boards. The lower roof was to have beams and crossbeams nine inches by nine inches with joists four inches by five with external horizontal siding of one-inch grooved deal. The church floor, according to the specifications, was to be one and one-quarter

¹¹¹Today reinforced concrete is often expected to have a compressive strength of 3,000-4,000 PSI and concrete tensile strengths (disregarded in reinforced concrete design) are about 300-600 PSI, possible 800 PSI. These higher tensile strengths show advances in the strength of concrete normally obtained as compared to those in Lethaby’s time.

¹¹²Observation of the nave windows suggests that the small colonettes rising from the sills to the lintels, and possibly the embrasures, may be of exposed concrete as well.

¹¹³Construction documents for Lethaby’s Brockhampton church in the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection.

inch deal seven inches wide. Seats were to be of oak. Large units of glass were avoided: all windows were to have small square diamond “lites” held in place by lead.

The only other instance where concrete appears to have been a noticeable visual element in a design by Lethaby is his submission (with others) for the Liverpool Cathedral competition of 1902. This unsuccessful entry appears, from drawings and photographs of the model at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, to suggest concrete as the principal structural material for the roof, with a sort of “corrugated” skyline when viewed from the side. Martin, in his thesis described the vaulting system for the design as concrete. This choice is indicated on the plans.¹¹⁴ Martin may be correct in suggesting that Lethaby had a dominant role in the architectural aspects of the design since he was the leading (and senior) architect in the group.¹¹⁵

An analysis of Lethaby’s use of materials in craft products will be omitted from the current discussion but a few remarks will be offered to indicate that Lethaby had the opportunity to know a number of crafts-materials well and was considered proficient in working with them. Martin reported that Lethaby designed furniture for a number of firms and designed metal work (mostly cast iron fireplaces) for Longden and Co..¹¹⁶ Lethaby also designed painted pottery, tiles for Wedgewood, woodwork for Farmer and Brindley and leadwork for Wenham and Waters.¹¹⁷ Work with a number of materials are in evidence in a description of Lethaby’s entries in the 1896 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society’s show which included his chimney-piece of marble and onyx (described as “beautiful” by the reviewer), wrought-iron and enamel fire-dogs, a marble-topped table, a rosewood workbench, and enameled

¹¹⁴Martin, op. cit., p. 105.

¹¹⁵Later, Andrew Saint in his biography of Shaw, who was one of the assessors of the competition in 1902, also described the submission as an “experimental concrete-roofed design sent in under Harry Wilson’s name and Sir Bentley (J.F.)—inspired Arts and Craftsmen.” (Richard Norman Shaw, 1976, op.cit., p. 365.) The competition was actually the second—the first was held in 1886, the actual building held up, like later attempts, by financial problems.

¹¹⁶Martin, op.cit., p. 85. Amongst Lethaby’s drawings in the R.I.B.A. collection are designs for several cast iron fireplaces, one with a copper hood.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

candlesticks.¹¹⁸ After the first years of the twentieth century, when Lethaby became involved in teaching and with his duties as Surveyor at Westminster Abbey, his realized design activities (excluding preservation actions) came mainly in the form of craftwork rather than architectural commissions. Supplementing his continued contact with materials in the education milieu and at the Abbey were his small, crafts-oriented commissions like the polished oak choir stalls at St. Paul's church at Four Elms (1915) in Kent.¹¹⁹

Contextual Comment—Contemporary Statements

To better understand Lethaby's opinions about architectural materials and to locate these firmly in the context of the times, selected comments about materials by outstanding contemporaries of Lethaby will next be offered. Influential writers on architecture preceding Lethaby harbored various opinions about iron as applied to architectural work. Mentioned at various places in this study was Ruskin's opposition, like Pugin's before him, to its use. Viollet-le-Duc's enthusiastic discussion of its potential in *Entretiens* exemplifies the opposite point of view. Lethaby's ally on an important issue of the 1890s in England, professionalism in architecture, Thomas Graham Jackson (1835-1924) allocated a portion of his 1905 lecture ("Reason in Architecture") to the Royal Academy to the subject of iron construction—not to condemn it but to instruct on its proper accommodation in the building arts. Another Arts and Crafts colleague, Walter Crane (1845-1915) while criticizing recent commercial buildings in 1896 argued for the honest expression of steel framing; it should not be covered over with other materials.¹²⁰

Turning to some other writers on architecture, mostly a bit younger than Lethaby, one could start with Henri Van de Velde (1863-1957). The Belgian's enthusiasm for the newer materials of building is

¹¹⁸"The Arts and Crafts Exhibition—Third Notice," *Studio*, Dec., 1896, pp. 198-199. (This was the fifth exhibition of the Society.)

¹¹⁹Martin, p. 108. The Gothic Revival church itself, completed in the late 1880's, is by the architect Edwin Hall. Begun in 1881, it is said to be the oldest concrete church in England.

¹²⁰"Of the Decoration of Public Buildings" in *Art and Life...* (1897), *op.cit.*, p. 118.

shown when he prophesied in 1902 a great future for iron, steel, aluminum and cement.¹²¹ Another contemporary, Hans Poelzig (1869-1936), head in 1906 of the Academy of Arts in Breslau, Germany (now Wrocław, Poland), and later the creator of the fantastic forms of the remodeled Grosses Schauspielhaus (Berlin, 1919) sounded a bit like Lethaby in his regard for traditional materials, if not in his caution against experimentation:

In spite of all the constructional achievements and changes most of the best materials are still the same and many of the constructions of the past remain unsurpassed. We are absolutely compelled to stay firmly planted on the shoulders of our forefathers and we deprive ourselves of a solid foothold if we begin needlessly to experiment afresh on our own account.”¹²²

Another noted German architect, writing almost two decades later, is representative of the opposite or anti-traditionalist viewpoint. Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), in 1924, in the third edition of the magazine G stated that the building materials in use at that time must be gotten rid of because they were preventing the development of a new architecture and that new materials must be found. If this was done, the building trades with their craftsman-orientation would be destroyed Mies said, but this was a logical consequence and was not to be lamented:

It is not so much a question of rationalizing existing work methods as of fundamentally remoulding the whole building trade.

So long as we use essentially the same materials, the character of building will not change, and this character, as I have already mentioned, ultimately determines the forms taken by the trade. Industrialization of the building trade is a question of material. Hence the demand for a new building material is the first prerequisite. Our technology must and will succeed in inventing a building material that can be manufactured technologically and

¹²¹From one of Van de Velde's writings collected in Kunstgewerbliche Laienpredigten (1902 and discussed in Nikolaus Pevsner's Pioneers of Modern Design, 1975 ed., p. 30. Another influential architect identified with the avant-garde in the early years of the twentieth century, Adolph Loos (1870-1933) seems to have been notably disinterested in using the new materials. Though he took the stripping away of ornament and simplification of architectural form even farther than English Arts and Crafts architects like Voysey and although his houses, with their flat-roofs and rectilinear volumes seem as much a part of (or prototype of) the International Style as those of Le Corbusier or Gropius, Loos rarely used steel and concrete, keeping to more traditional building materials. This can be seen, for example, in the many descriptions of Loos' work in Ludwig Münz's and Gustav Kunstler's Adolf Loos (1964, publ. 1966 in English).

¹²²From Poelzig's essay Die Dritte Deutsche Kunstgewerbe Ausstellung (Third German Exhibition of Applied Art, Dresden, 1906), repr. (in English) in Programs and manifestoes on 20th-century architecture, Ulrich Conrads, ed., 1970, p. 15.

utilized industrially, that is solid, weather-resistant, sound-proof, and possessed of good insulating properties. It will have to be a light material whose utilization does not merely permit but actually invites industrialization...It is quite clear to me that this will lead to the total destruction of the building trade in the form in which it has existed up to now; but whoever regrets that the house of the future can not longer be constructed by building craftsman should bear in mind that the motor-car is no longer built by the wheelwright.¹²³

Similarly, Mies' predecessor as head of the Bauhaus, Hannes Meyer (1889-1954) wrote a few years later, that the "new age provides new building materials for the new way of building houses."¹²⁴ The long list of new materials Meyer next offered included reinforced concrete, synthetic rubber, synthetic wood, aluminum, plywood, and asbestos.¹²⁵

In Italy, enthusiasm for new building materials like that shown by Meyer and Mies van der Rohe, is paralleled in the words of Antonio Sant' Elia (1888-1916) in 1914: "Futurist architecture is the architecture of calculation, of audacity and simplicity: the architecture of reinforced concrete, of iron, of glass, of pasteboard, of textile fibre, and of all those substitutes for wood, stone and brick which make possible maximum elasticity and lightness."¹²⁶ Sant' Elia criticized the application of new materials to achieve buildings rendered in the "historical styles" and stated that the use of new materials should eliminate these "styles" and, apparently, the more astylar but still traditional approach Lethaby was wont to support. Later in the passage just quoted Sant' Elia continued:

The calculation of the strength of materials, the use of reinforced concrete, rule out 'architecture' in the classical and traditional sense. Modern building materials and our scientific ideas absolutely do not lend themselves to the disciplines of historical style and are the chief cause of the grotesque of building a la mode, in which an attempt is made to force the splendidly light and slender supporting members and the apparent fragility of reinforced concrete to imitate the heavy curve of arches and the massive appearance of marble.¹²⁷

¹²³Repr. (in English) in Conrads, *op.cit.*, G, p. 81. G is a shortened acronym for Material zur Elementaren Gestaltung (Material for Elemental Gravity).

¹²⁴From Meyer's thesis "building," publ. in *bauhaus* (No. 4) 1928, repr. in Conrads' *Programs and...*, p. 117.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶Repr. in English in Conrads, *op.cit.*, pp. 36-37. These words by Sant' Elia appear with some by Tomasso Marinetti and Decio Cinti as part of "A Manifesto of Futurist Architecture," publ. in July, 1914.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 35.

Kindred Futurist Tomasso Marinetti reinforced the foregoing statement in some additions he made to the text having to do with cluttering up the appearance of the new building materials with meaningless ornament: “The new beauty of concrete and iron is profaned by the super-imposition of carnival decorative incrustations justified neither by structural necessity nor by our taste...”¹²⁸

The Development of Cast Iron and Steel in Architecture

Iron, although used extensively in buildings and engineering works only in the nineteenth century, has been known to man for quite a long time. Iron is a modern material only in that it was not until about two hundred years ago that the technological means to produce it in sufficient quantity and to use it in a sophisticated way were found. Whatever unpleasant remarks Lethaby made about the material were based on what he saw as the misapplications in the nineteenth century, especially as judged by Arts and Crafts theory. The reservations he had about the material, born in Ruskin’s and Morris’ thought, may explain the relatively late surfacing in the 1920s of his unreserved enthusiasm for it. Lethaby’s increasing acceptance of iron-work in architecture during the early decades of the twentieth century, though not precocious in timing, must have had a significant impact on the architectural community in England where his eminence as an architectural critic was, by then, certainly acknowledged. In Lethaby’s career as an architectural designer (essentially over a few years into the twentieth century) his hesitant use of iron, compared to many contemporaries, shows the effects of Arts and Crafts philosophy and perhaps a reluctance to use the material stemming from a feeling of inadequacy on his part in matters of engineering. Of course, there would have been ways for him to make use of iron visually without incurring any structural challenges.

Iron and steel had been put to a variety of uses in architecture and engineering and in considerable volume by the beginning of the twentieth century when Lethaby still practiced actively. Yet many prominent architects, in addition to those who could wear the mantle of the Arts and Crafts, did not use iron to a significant degree in their work or buried it under more conventional coverings and treatments.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 34.

Considering Lethaby's debt to Ruskin especially in his earlier career, one can say it is notable that he used iron at all. But one should not forget that a good portion of the building in his small oeuvre are houses, building which (especially those not of great size) do not need the strength of iron.

Lethaby and the Development of Concrete in Architecture

Intelligent use of reinforcing concrete with metal, to compensate for concrete's inherent weakness in tension, is the essential contribution of the last few centuries. Unreinforced concrete had been used extensively in ancient times by the Romans. The Parthenon, built c. 126 A.D. serves as a good example of Roman skill in the use of concrete as they knew it. Vitruvius included commentary on concrete in De Architectura (c. 28 B.C.). He described how mortar mixed with small stones could be used to produce a hard monolithic mass. Some of Vitruvius' words were repeated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by other writers on architecture—Leon Battisti Alberti, Andrea Palladio and Philibert de' L'Orme, for example. From Roman times until the middle years of the eighteenth century, however, concrete seems to have ceased to be part of the builder's stock of materials.

In the last half of the eighteenth century experimentation with concrete and related methods of construction became much more significant. The testing of and usage of concrete increased even more in the nineteenth century, including activity in the architectural sphere. The man shortly later to be Lethaby's most important architectural employer, Norman Shaw, was, in the 1870s, beginning to use concrete in his work. Shaw was an established, prominent architect in the years Lethaby worked for him and Shaw's interest in using concrete is therefore noteworthy. In 1874-1876 Shaw provided in the industrial block for Bournemouth Convent a concrete three-story wall, mostly covered, but exposed at the first level, with a pebble-faced surface. In another structure for the convent (1879-1880) more acceptance by Shaw of exposed concrete is indicated as the three-story wall adjoining the staircase was left in that state.

Shaw's collaboration with W.H. Lascelles is also worth noting.¹²⁹ For the Paris Exhibition of 1878 Shaw designed two cottages for Lascelles (using the latter's slab construction technique), a special stable for the Prince of Wales, and the English Jury House (of concrete, brick, completely ornamented in a classicizing mode). In 1878 Shaw and Lascelles collaborated with another architect, Maurice B. Adams, to produce Sketches for Cottages, featuring a series of designs (perspectives, sections, plans, etc.) for cottages of the Old English type then in vogue. The designs employed Lascelles cement slab system although they looked like the half-timbered buildings of this type that Shaw had been designing for at least ten years. The Builder of 1878 criticized the design for using "modern" materials in an "archaeological" style—with wall surfaces finished to look like tiling: "All this dressing up of the new material in the old cloak is so much labour thrown away in making a sham."¹³⁰ Before 1878, Lascelles, working with Shaw, had built some cottages in Croyden using the former's slab system. In Saint's book on Shaw, he discussed some of these still remaining—for example, one at #237-239 Sydenham Road with its cement dining room ceiling panel complete with flowers and concrete and iron joists spanning over the living room.¹³¹

Following the example of Shaw's Sketches for Cottages (with Adams and Lascelles), Ernest Newton, Shaw's chief assistant before Lethaby, published a volume of sketches of residences in 1882 which contained some designs in concrete. In these years Lethaby was already involved in his own architectural training and possibly became aware of these developments. Curiously, concrete does not appear prominently in discussions of Shaw's contributions to architecture in the 1880s, the period embracing most of Lethaby's tenure in his office, nor in the next decade.

¹²⁹W.H. Lascelles, originally an architect, is described by Andrew Saint in Richard Norman Shaw (1977 repr., orig. 1976) as "an expert on labour-saving machines, joinery, and concrete construction." (p. 169) Lascelles experimented with cement bricks and slabs and by 1875 acquired a patent for cement slab construction. These slabs could be used for both walls and roofs. There was also concrete, iron reinforced, support parts (Lascelles' improvements of 1878) to use with vertical slabs, or as joists, rafters, and window frames, although Lascelles usually used more conventional materials for these. (op.cit., pp. 166, 168, 170.)

¹³⁰Quoted from The Builder, Saint, in Richard Norman Shaw, op.cit., p. 170. More evidence in the 1870s of interest in concrete is one of the R.I.B.A. papers (1875-1876): "Concrete as Building Material."

¹³¹Saint, Richard Norman Shaw, op.cit., p. 170.

With the turn of the twentieth century, employment of concrete in architectural works generally regained the kind of popularity one imagines it had with ancient Roman builders. The first ten years of the twentieth century, the decade which also found Lethaby making his major design statement in concrete (the church at Brockhampton, 1900-1902), are full of interesting developments. It might be noted here, because of the connection with Lethaby, that 1902, when Lethaby's All Saints at Brockhampton was finished, Randall Wells, who had supervised the All Saints construction, built a church at nearby Kempley. In addition to the same kind of insistence on local traditional materials found in Lethaby's church, Wells used concrete too, to form the high-pointed vaults of the side chapel and vestry. Norman Shaw continued to be a leader in the use of concrete in England. His Portland House (from 1907 and completed by 1908) in Lloyd's Avenue (London) was, according to Andrew Saint, significant as "one of the first major office blocks in reinforced concrete," although it was faced with Portland Stone.¹³²

The following two decades, the 1910s and 1920s, saw ever-increasing use of concrete in architecture. Lethaby wrote enthusiastically in this period about concrete, although his building days were over. Lethaby's friend and philosophical colleague in architecture, Beresford Pite, took an interest in concrete as well. In 1911 Pite addressed the Concrete Institute on "The Aesthetic Treatment of Concrete" and in 1925 Pite's "The Architecture of Concrete" appeared in the R.I.B.A. Journal. Edwin Lutyens, who had also shared the Arts and Crafts point of view with Lethaby at least in early work, used reinforced concrete (columns and an inner dome these supported) in his Free Independent Church (1911) in Hampstead.

Comments on Lethaby's Use of and Knowledge of Building Materials

Occasionally, writers on architecture from Lethaby's time and later have commented about Lethaby's abilities in dealing with building materials. Some were flattering. Muthesius in Das Englische Haus (1906) described Lethaby's activities as "showing the finest understanding" in working with

¹³²Ibid., p. 393.

materials.¹³³ Muthesius based this appraisal heavily on Lethaby's use of the more traditional materials, it seems likely.

A number of years later, following Lethaby's publication in The Builder of some of his ideas about using concrete and brick, another architect showed more reserved enthusiasm for Lethaby's talents. In 1921, in The Builder, Lethaby had published some sketches and accompanying comments about towers and how concrete and brick could be used in their construction. But J.F. Wilson, in a letter to The Builder prompted by Lethaby's articles complained that the towers were structurally impractical. The tapering cross-section of the concrete, Wilson observed, was expensive to achieve and this was not a good use of material. Also taking exception to the taper in the brick tower, Wilson pointed out that too many templates would be needed. Since formwork for concrete and templates for shaped brick work would be significant cost items in any attempt to make practical use of Lethaby's admittedly abstract suggestions, it does seem that Wilson's points are well taken. But Wilson's objections are concerned with a particular presentation by Lethaby. Reginald Blomfield, roughly ten years later (1932), looked at Lethaby's overall involvement with material and voiced his admiration for his "craftsman instinct for using and shaping each and every material in the right way—brick, stone, marble, iron and wood."¹³⁴

Among more recent appraisals there is a less gracious one about Lethaby's competency at least in the area of concrete. Describing a lecture by Lethaby from 1913 on concrete (and one two years earlier by Beresford Pite) Peter Collins has suggested that the advice offered was not very substantial. This was because, he continued, "they not only had no personal knowledge of the problem of design and constructing in concrete [but were also]... unfamiliar with the more interesting reinforced concrete buildings in Europe" at that time.¹³⁵ As to the first objection, Lethaby did, after all, construct a concrete church nave at the turn of the century which would have entailed addressing a number of problems

¹³³Muthesius, Das Englische Haus (1908 ed.), op.cit., p. 153.

¹³⁴W.R. Lethaby—An Impression and a Tribute (pamphlet, 1932), "Vote of Thanks" section, p. 15. Orig. delivered as an address Feb. 1932 to the R.I.B.A.; also publ. in R.I.B.A.J., 1932.

¹³⁵Collins, Concrete..., op.cit., p. 136.

relating to concrete construction if not reinforced concrete design theory. As to the second point, Lethaby apparently knew of new concrete work on the Continent through publications, as he had slides of these in his 1913 lecture. However, Collins seemed doubtful that this kind of familiarity could be drawn upon to transmit useful information about the works in the same way that actually examining the works might be.¹³⁶ Stephen Bayley, writing about Lethaby in 1975 was more positive in his appraisal of Lethaby's dealings with the "newer" building materials. Making Lethaby's activities antecedent to Le Corbusier's, on the issue of comparing machines and architecture as well, Bayley wrote: "Lethaby was something of a prophet: eleven years before Le Corbusier, he saw the similarities between modern building and machines, and suggested the potential importance of new material."¹³⁷

The first section of this chapter has offered chronologically arranged selections from Lethaby's theory covering his ideas on materials in general and on some specific building materials. Information on Lethaby's use of materials in his work followed. A succeeding portion aimed at helping to better understand Lethaby's view and activities by bringing up the views of his contemporaries and predecessors. A short closing section presented a few comments by others from Lethaby's time and later about how Lethaby dealt with materials as an architectural practitioner and theorist.

In his attitude towards materials as in much else, Lethaby showed himself at least in part to be the disciple of Ruskin. Two significant points about materials important to Lethaby's theory are traceable to Ruskin. One is the notion that the architect, or designer, or architectural work must remain close to the material; he must have had direct contact with building materials to make proper use of them. Another point concerns "honesty" in the use of materials. This moral attribute and avoidance of its converse, "deceptions," are stressed in both Ruskin's and Lethaby's writings. Also, Lethaby brought Ruskin's moralizing tone to his criticisms of contemporary practices in material usage. Materials in his time were being degraded, Lethaby agreed with Ruskin. Lethaby, however, extended the concern about degradation

¹³⁶Ibid. Collins pointed out that Lethaby confessed in the 1913 lecture that he had never personally seen the works on the Continent about which he spoke. (Ibid.)

¹³⁷"W.R. Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition," R.I.B.A.J., April, 1975, p. 29.

to materials beyond those found acceptable to Ruskin's architectural palette. Cast iron, rejected by Ruskin as a building material nowhere nearly as acceptable as masonry, was something of concern for Lethaby. It suffered "degradation" in the nineteenth century through misuses.

Unlike Ruskin, Lethaby is important for the enthusiasm he registered, especially in his later writings about the potential of newer building materials, like iron and concrete. Also, turning away from the perceptive but subjective judgments of Ruskin, Lethaby used his considerable influence as a writer to call for the orderly, scientific, study of materials—all material, in fact, which might show potential in building. Compared to other architectural theorists, Lethaby stands out as one who laid great importance in the role that proper and knowledgeable deployment of materials played within the overall scope of the building process.

Turning to Lethaby's work as compared to his theory, one can see that the newer building materials usually figure overall quite insignificantly in the former. Considering the way iron was used in architecture by the time Lethaby was practicing actively, one would have to consider him rather conservative in his application of this material. Concrete also is not widely employed in Lethaby's oeuvre, with the notable example of Brockhampton Church. The absence of these materials might be explained partly by Lethaby's self-admitted deficiencies in the skills and knowledge of the engineer; use of iron and concrete, structurally, anyway, require some engineering skill beyond the principles or at least different from those applicable to working with stone and brick. Also, of course, a number of Lethaby's built works, the larger proportion of what was en toto only a few projects were residences and the scale of these made them among the least demanding insofar as an attempt might be made to effectively utilize the particular structural advantages of concrete.

Nevertheless, when one considers concrete, Lethaby's employer and mentor, Norman Shaw, must have provided an exceptional example for Lethaby. Shaw's experiments with concrete, some of the most interesting works undertaken only a few years before Lethaby entered his office, were among the most notable by architects of his generation in England. If Shaw's influence did not result in Lethaby using the material much in his own work, it might have been partly responsible for Lethaby's later enthusiasm for it

in his writings. And at Brockhampton Lethaby made a singular contribution to the material's development in modern architectural use in allowing it to serve as a principle part of the structure in a highly visible way (shuttering marks and all) in a building-type unquestionably falling, unlike mill buildings for example, within contemporary parameters of what was considered to be legitimate architecture (that is churches, not factories). In terms of the actual impact on architectural thought, however, it is clear that Lethaby's influence regarding materials as in other areas, lies primarily in his writing.

Practical production and utilization of the newer building materials and more efficient manufacturing and employment of the more traditional ones (for example, brick) have depended on advances in the science and technology and the new machines which arise from these advances. The connection between building materials and the technology needed to produce and utilize them is quite strong. The next chapter will address topics linked closely to the issues surrounding materials addressed in this chapter, that part of Lethaby's theory having to do with his views on machines, science and technology.

CHAPTER X

MACHINES, ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Introduction

This chapter seeks both to extend the discussion of issues raised in the foregoing one and to look at the same issues from a different point of view. To comment further on the extension aspect, one can describe the discussion as moving from Lethaby's views on materials (old or new)—perhaps one could think of them as the products (or units) of traditional building knowledge or of new technology—to a consideration of Lethaby's views on:

- 1) The devices which either brought building materials into being or were necessary for their effective use—that is, machines—and...
- 2) The procedures attending the creation and utilization of both materials and related machinery—that is, technology.

In this chapter some of the same issues as the last will be looked at, but from a different vantage is justifiable too, since it was the particular condition of the world (and especially Britain) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, understood through Lethaby's particular capacities, which encouraged certain opinions. These, though subject to change somewhat with time, were at a moment consistent on these subjects: materials, machinery, and their attendant technology. Despite this consistency, it is thought that the ensuing discussion of Lethaby's views on machinery, engineering, and science, as related particularly to architecture, will supply an important increment to an understanding of his overall architectural theory.

The first section of this chapter discusses Lethaby's attitude towards "machines" rooted in Arts and Crafts philosophy and his later evolution from that view and its accompanying adherence in practice to an acceptance of the machine which, though certainly not unqualified, had a notable impact because of Lethaby's influence in English architectural matters. Lethaby's involvement with Britain's Design and Industries Association supplies some special evidence of Lethaby's progression toward a more "pro-

machine” attitude and Lethaby’s connection to this Association is given special attention in this chapter for that reason.¹

The preceding chapter, and the first section of this one both address Lethaby’s coming to grips with the problems of newer building technology as it would apply to related materials and machinery. The portion of this chapter following the part on machines will look at the problem from the standpoint of the occupations most active in producing technological change in late nineteenth and twentieth century architecture—the engineers and the scientists. In the section on engineers and engineering, discussion revolves first around Lethaby’s conviction that engineering had been and was then a primary component of architecture.² Also, to be brought out is Lethaby’s acknowledgement that the professions of architect and engineer are now (by Lethaby’s time) different. Lethaby thought that the two professions should work together for their mutual benefit—as will be discussed in more detail. Recent history showed, Lethaby concluded, the insalubrious results in both the practice of engineering and of architecture of not drawing properly on the benefits of the other. Like another influential early twentieth century architectural writer across the Channel, Le Corbusier, Lethaby saw great value in some modern works of engineering. Architects would do well, Lethaby noted, to try to capture the virtues of these in their own works.

The next division in the discussion shifts in attention from the applied scientist (the engineer) to the “pure”—with the focus not really on Science as a profession, but on science as a body of thought, separate from the Arts. Lethaby’s statements of faith in “science” for the improvement of Man are part of his shift away in later years from purely Arts and Crafts interests, and show him to be more in the mainstream of early twentieth century Western optimism about such matters.

¹ Among Lethaby’s writings see in particular “Design in Industry” (1915) written for the Design and Industries Association (and republ. in Form in..., 1922).

² Remarks on engineers, engineering and the relationship of both to architecture are to be found in a number of Lethaby’s writings. Some that address the subject most directly are the short series in The Builder of 1929, “Architecture as Engineering,” in 1931: “Engineering and Architecture,” and in “The Engineer’s Art,” Architecture (1925).

In the final part of the chapter are discussed Lethaby's prescriptions for future improvement of the architectural profession, including the emphasis that should be placed in the future on engineering and science in the processes of architectural education.

Machines

Attitudes about the machine in Lethaby's early writing are unmistakably those of the Arts and Crafts Movement—views developed and propounded by Ruskin, Morris and Webb to the effect that machinery was to be regarded as an opposing and malevolent force in the world. John Brandon-Jones, a past Master of the Art Workers Guild, looked back in 1970 and commented on what he saw from that point in time as the deleterious effects (on such as Lethaby) of William Morris' preachings:

...it is an unfortunate fact that the frequent tirades by Morris against the senseless use of machinery for the making of poor substitutes for craft-work have led many of his followers to believe that there is something wicked in the use of any machine for any purpose, and that there is some special spiritual grace to be obtained by spending hours hacking away with a hand tool at a job that could be done in a tenth of the time by machinery.³

Morris' skepticism about industrial production seems to have been successfully grafted to Lethaby's thought if one looks at the latter's early article "Cast Iron and its Treatment for Artistic Purposes" (1890) wherein he showed his preference for primitive manufacturing and offered, in romantic phrasing, the following:

For me, therefore, the primitive apparatus of the East for obtaining iron—a few stone(?) and clay for furnace, a goatskin and bamboo for bellows, and charcoal for fuel—producing the wonderful watered blades of swords: or daggers inlaid with purple gems like the stain of a death-blow: or those in which rubies run like red drops of blood along a groove to the point. Such apparatus is more for my immediate purpose than the towers of fire and sulphur which produce—what?⁴

In the same article, in criticism of contemporary industrial activity Lethaby proceeded in the moralizing tone easily discovered when reading the words of Arts and Crafts thinkers: "Too many of our industries

³ "After William Morris," op.cit., p. 55.

⁴ Journal of the Society of Arts, 14 Feb., 1890, p. 273.

have fallen out of the categories of arts into mere ‘production,’ as it is called, wanton and careless of other ends than immediate profit.”⁵

The Fabian distaste (and Lethaby was an adherent) for such mainstays of capitalism as “profit” also are evident in the passage just quoted. In another passage focusing on political ills concomitant with industrial ones Lethaby wrote: “Up to 1800 I suppose men had been left their skills and tools and were craft artists. Now all that gone into blast furnace and profit! And Carlyle foresaw it all and lifted up his voice in prophecy.”⁶ In 1892 Lethaby lamented the eclipse (and disappearance) of valuable modes of building material usage by machine technology:

The traditional knowledge of local material, the general harmony, almost as of nature’s own, when the material of the countryside is used, the craft of gathering these materials and the art of using them, is submerged in the universal deluge of dreary machine stamped tiles, or Welsh slate, ‘as specified’ by this office-based architect.⁷

Parallel antipathy towards the machine is noticed in the account Horace Townsend provided in the Studio of 1893 discussing The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show of that year. Townsend singled out a previously encounter with an American visitor as the Philistine villain and reminded the reader, as Lethaby might, that economists as well, while perhaps generally better educated and articulate, were also not helpful to the cause of the hand-craftsman:

As an American manufacturer said to the present writer at a previous exhibition: ‘Well, sir, these things don’t interest me any. I could turn out a thousand copies of each of them by machinery. Look at that copperdish—if I wanted to, I should make a die and stamp ‘em by the gross.’ There spoke the soul of the bourgeois; and unless we happen to enjoy the evidence of personal thought and care expended on one piece of work for its own sake the very best

⁵ Ibid. p. 279. Lethaby, like Ruskin, before him, did not view favorably the phenomenon of London’s Crystal Palace (1851). Perhaps the surprising feats of standardizing prefabricated buildings there were thought as underserving of praise as the materials that were used.

⁶ Scraps and Scraps, A.H. Powell, ed., 1956, p. 23; a collection of Lethaby’s aphorisms not identified as to original context or date.

⁷ “The Builder’s Art and the Craftsman,” as found in Architecture: A Profession or an Art? (op.cit.), p. 157.

thing should well only provoke similar, though, possibly more elegantly expressed criticism from the modern economist with his machine-made opinions.⁸

In 1896, Lethaby's philosophical ally Walter Crane showed his concern, like Lethaby had in his 1892 article, that "harmony" be a consideration when assessing the old crafts ways and the new mechanical ones. Crane also emphasized the destructive effect of the machine on the complexion of English cities:

But, as we have seen, our century of machine industry and commercial competition has done more to obliterate the past in our cities than any former one; and the new developments of mechanical and material resource[s] which modern scientific investigation has brought in, too rapidly succeed each other, or are too rapidly modified, to be perfectly adapted and united to harmonious form by artistic invention, which is a much slower growth, and owes much of its charm to tradition and association.⁹

Across the Atlantic, the rising American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, had been touched by the Arts and Crafts Movement there. He spoke at the forming of the new Arts and Crafts Society in Chicago in 1901 and indicated his awareness of Ruskin's and Morris' influence on the issue of the machine, which he identified as a part of modern life too important to ignore: "The tyros are taught in the name of John Ruskin and William Morris to shun and despise the essential tool of their Age as a matter commercial and antagonistic to Art."¹⁰ The importance Wright was willing to acknowledge for the machine in 1901 shows in the following passage: "In this age of steel and steam, the tools with which civilization's true record will be written are scientific thoughts made operative in iron and bronze and steel and in the plastic processes which characterize this age, all of which we call Machine. The Electric Lamp is in this sense [also] a Machine."¹¹ Wright described the typical domestic environment of that time—emphasizing the ubiquity of machine-made products, but in a syntax as full of disdain as Lethaby's might have been:

⁸ "The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at the New Gallery, 1893" *Studio* (October, 1893), pp. 6-7.

⁹ "Of the Decoration of Public Buildings," *Art and Life* (pub. 1897), pp 121-122.

¹⁰ "The Art and Craft of the Machine" (1901), as repr. in *Roots of Contemporary American Architecture*, Lewis Mumford, ed.; 1972 ed., pp. 172-173 (orig. 1952).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Look within all this typical monotony—in variety and see there the machine-made copies of handicraft-originals; in fact, unless you, the householder, are fortunate indeed, possessed of extraordinary taste and opportunity, all you possess is in some degree a machine-made example of vitiated handicraft, imitation antique furniture made antique by the Machine, itself of all abominations the most abominable. Everything must be curved and carved and carved and turned. The whole mess a tortured sprawl supposed artistic. And the floor-coverings? Probably machine-weavings of Oriental Rug patterns—pattern and texture mechanically perfect; or worse, your walls are papered with the paper imitations of old tapestry, imitation patterns and imitation textures stamped or printed by the Machine; imitation under foot, imitation overhead and imitation all round about you.¹²

Wright refused to lay the blame for the undesirable state of affairs just described on inanimate objects and voiced his optimism that the machine, properly harnessed, may be of great benefit to Man: “But, I say, usurped by Greed and deserted by its natural interpreter, the Artist, the Machine is only the creature, not the Creator of this iniquity! I say the Machine has noble possibilities. Unwillingly forced to this degradation, degraded by the Arts themselves.”¹³ Wright also stated: “The Machine does not write the doom of Liberty, but is working at man’s hand as a peerless tool, for him to use to put foundation beneath a genuine Democracy. There the machine may conquer human drudgery to some purpose, taking it upon itself to broaden, lengthen, strengthen and deepen the life of the simplest man.”¹⁴ Lethaby, compared to Wright, reached a state of acceptance of the machine, but even then a qualified one, only at a noticeably later date. Where, for Lethaby and his allies in England, the machine seems to have been viewed as an encumbrance to the achievement of the ideal political state—a dream socialism resting partly on a mythic view of medieval time, Wright saw the machine (as in the passage just quoted) as furthering a democracy of his own interpretation.

In Where the Great City Stands (1917) Lethaby’s English Arts and Crafts colleague C.R. Ashbee acknowledged Wright’s contribution to design utilizing machine production, a contribution resulting from a commitment to the machine much surpassing that of his own or Lethaby’s:

¹² Ibid., p. 173.

¹³ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 185.

“Here in the hands of Frank Lloyd Wright the processes of standardization...have been so perfected that it is possible for one creative mind to build with an almost infinite variety of mechanical parts, each of which has been in the first instance thought out in its reference to the machine that has made it or that will finally put it into its place of the building.”¹⁵

Wright’s acceptance of the machine was not only more wholehearted than Lethaby’s or even Ashbee’s but also pre-dated that of the two Englishmen. Though Ruskin’s Seven Lamps was one of the first books Wright owned and Morris was one of his early heroes, Wright, even in 1900, so Davey has reported, differed from the Ruskin/Morris point of view on the subject of machines and attacked Ashbee on the issue of the importance of the machine in art, Wright arguing for the indissoluble connection of artist and machine in the future.¹⁶

For comparative purposes it seems worthwhile to take note of some of Wright’s enthusiastic views on the machine in contrast to Lethaby’s. One notable repository of Wright’s thoughts on the subject is Wright’s address in 1901 to a meeting of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society at Hull House.¹⁷ The third paragraph of this address offered this assessment of the impact of the machine on modern life: “In this age of steel and steam the tools with which civilization’s true record will be written are scientific thoughts made operative in iron and bronze and steel and in the plastic processes which characterize this age, all of which we call machines.”¹⁸ But like Lethaby, in his appraisal of the effect of the machine in England in recent times, Wright stated in the same address that man’s use of modern machinery had not had good

¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 20. Ashbee visited the United States in 1910 and could have met Wright then or in 1903 when he was in the United States addressing the Arts and Crafts Society of Boston. They also corresponded. See, for example, “Ten Letters from Frank Lloyd Wright to Charles Robert Ashbee”, Architectural History, xiii, 1970, pp. 64-76. Frank Lloyd Wright, seemingly never mentioned in Lethaby’s writing, was much more important to Ashbee. Peter Davey, not by any means the first to note the Wright-Ashbee connection, in his Architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement (1980) called Ashbee Wright’s “closest European friend.”(p.195).

¹⁶ Davey, op. cit., p. 190. This observation by Davey was derived from Ashbee’s Memoirs (TS kept at the Victoria and Albert Museum Library. (n.d., Ashbee edited these diaries from Kings College, Cambridge, late in life, Davey has said.).

¹⁷ Wright referred to it as the “inaugural” meeting, although the Society was founded in 1896. Perhaps it was the first of that year.

¹⁸ Repr. in Lewis Mumford’s Roots of Contemporary Architecture, 1972, op. cit., p. 170.

effects in his country: “We must walk blind folded though the streets of this, or any great modern city, to fail to see that all this magnificent resource of machine-power and superior material has brought to us, so far, is degradation.”¹⁹

Wright continued in his 1901 address with biting sarcasm, criticizing a number of Chicago buildings (skyscrapers with “false stone skins,” the Gothic forms of the University of Chicago, and the Chicago Public Library in the “Asinine Renaissance” style) and American public building generally, and inveighed against what he called the inadequate and irrelevant education he claimed the art students of the Chicago Art Institute would bring with them into working life:

The grand introduction [to Chicago architecture as just mentioned] over, we go further on to find amid plaster casts of antiquity, earnest students patiently gleaning a half-acre or more of archaeological dry-bones, arming here for industrial conquest, in other words to go out and try to make a living by making some valuable impression on the Machine Age in which they live. Their fundamental toil in this business about which they will know just this much less than nothing is—the Machine. In this acre or more not one relic has any vital relationship to things as they are for these students...²⁰

Further, on the subject of education in his 1901 address, Wright departed from Arts and Crafts theory: “The tyros are taught in the name of John Ruskin and William Morris to shun and despise the essential tool of their Age [the Machine Age] as a matter commercial and antagonistic to Art.”²¹ As in his earlier passage on how machines have degraded the city, Wright’s words paralleled English Arts and Crafts criticism of machine in his opinion as to how they had affected the manufacture of such smaller entities as household objects. Machines, both Lethaby and Wright would say, should not be used to imitate handcraft or simulate old work:

Look with all this typical monotony—in variety and see there the machine-made copies of handicraft originals; in fact, unless you, the householder, are fortunate indeed, possessed of extraordinary taste and opportunity, all you possess is in some degree a machine-made

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 170-171.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 172. Wright also criticized the Art Institute building itself, including in his talk a complaint about what he said was the uselessness of its lobby.(Ibid.).

²¹ Pp. 172-173.

example of imitated handicraft, imitation antique furniture made antique by the machine, itself of all abominations the most abominable. Everything must be carved or carved and turned. The whole mass a tortured sprawl supposed artistic. And the floor coverings? Probably machine-weavings of Oriental Rug patterns—pattern and texture mechanically perfect, or worse, your walls are papered with paper-imitations of old tapestry, imitation patterns and imitation textures, stamped or printed by the machine;...

...about you a general cheap machine-made ‘profusion’ of—copies of copies of original imitations.²²

The workman, Wright continued a bit further on, had come to regard the machine as his nemesis and “conspires against machinery in the trades with a wild despair...”²³ Later in the address, Wright appears to have found that the worker’s attitude was justified: “Already, as we stand today, the machine has weakened the artist to the point of destruction and antiquated the craftsman altogether. Earlier forms of Art are by abuse all but destroyed.”²⁴ But Wright saw no reason to blame the machine itself for the troubles that have been caused. He has said a bit earlier in the address:

And among the Few, the favored chosen Few who love Art by machine and would devote their energies to it so that it may live and let them live—any training they can seek would still be a protest against the Machine as the Creator of all this iniquity, when (God knows) it is no more than the Creature.

But I say, usurped by Greed and deserted by its natural interpreter, the Artist, the Machine is only the creature, not the Creator of this iniquity! I say the machine has noble possibilities unwillingly forced to this degradation, degraded by the Arts themselves.²⁵

Wright had asserted then in this 1901 address, that machines were not being used properly and Lethaby would have agreed that, at least, they had potential in their own province—away from attempts to simulate handicraft. Wright continued in his talk: “...the advantages of the Machine are wasted and we

²² Ibid., p. 173.

²³ Ibid., p. 177.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 182.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 177-178

suffer from a riot of aesthetic murder and every where live with debased handicraft.”²⁶ Further on, more optimistically, Wright said: “Rightly used the very curse of Machinery puts upon handicraft should emancipate the artist from temptation to petty structural deceit and end this wearisome struggle to make things seem what they are not and can never be.”²⁷ Wright gave an example from the area of woodworking to suggest attainments in furniture-making by machine which might transcend those of the well-known, craft-based firms of the past:

The machines used in woodwork will show that by unlimited power in cutting, shaping, smoothing, and by the tireless repeat, they have emancipated beauties of wood-nature, making possible, without waste, beautiful surface treatments and clean strong forms that veneers of Sheraton or Chippendale only hinted at with dire extravagance.²⁸

Wright closed his address linking technology to larger issues with a prophecy about the beneficial effects of the machine in the future, when it would be mastered and properly controlled. Wright’s thoughts on the machine are linked strongly here to the realization of a specific political system (Democracy), something not so overtly found in Lethaby’s words, although the latter was a Fabian Socialist.

“The machine does not write the doom of Liberty, but is waiting at man’s hand as a peerless tool, for him to use to put foundation beneath a genuine Democracy. Then the machine may conquer human drudgery to some purpose, taking it upon itself to broaden, lengthen, strengthen and deepen the life of the simplest man. What limits do we dare imagine to an Art that is organic fruit of an adequate life for the individual! Although this power is not murderous, chained to botchwork and bunglers’ ambitions, the creative Artist will take it surely into his hand, and, in the name of Liberty, swiftly undo the deadly mischief it has created.”²⁹

By the second decade of the twentieth century changes are apparent in Lethaby’s attitude toward the machine, but the more biased earlier view still surfaced with regularity. In 1913 he wrote: “...now a

²⁶ Ibid., p. 179.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 182.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 179. Terra cotta was also mentioned as a material in which new possibilities had been opened up through machine use: “Modern machines (and a process is a machine) have rendered this material as sensitive to the creative brain as a dry plate is to the lens of the camera.” (Ibid., p. 180)

²⁹ Ibid., p. 155.

great wedge has been driven in between the craftsman of every kind and his customers by the method of large production by machinery.”³⁰ And later, in 1917, he said: “Machinery is no more real work than hand-organ noises are real music.” Machine labor was labor wasted and that was “the waste of life itself, it is half murder, it has something of the horribly and blackly satanic about it. To my mind, it is the great typical modernism.” In another passage from the same source, Lethaby observed (perhaps incorrectly) that the question of machines “troubles most minds.” Machines might be the “wrecking force in the world.”³¹

In 1922 in an introduction, possibly by Harry Peach, to a reprinting of Lethaby’s article “Simple Furniture” (1892) as a pamphlet for the Design and Industries Association’s Dryad Handicrafts series, one finds: “At the present moment, many are trying to free themselves from the sterile and soulless production and reproduction of the average factory, and feel that craving for real things that were made by human beings, for human beings.”³² The antipathetic component of Lethaby’s attitude toward machinery was still discernible in 1926. In the discussion following the Seventh Annual Lecture Conference on Industrial Welfare at which Lethaby had spoken, E.C. Knappert) remarked that some “anti-machine talk” could be read into Lethaby’s address and added, as if to underline the futility of such a position, that the “machine is here to stay.”³³

³⁰ “Art and Workmanship” (1913), orig. publ. in The Imprint, as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 213.

³¹ The remainder of quotes in this paragraph from “The Foundation in Labor,” orig. publ. in The Highway (1917) and repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 215-223. Lethaby’s mentor Philip Webb was concerned with the harmfulness of machine work. In Lethaby’s serialized biography on Webb in 1925 (he drew on a letter written by Webb in 1901, commenting on the dehumanization of labor in factory work. (as in the 1935 repr. as a book, Philip Webb, p. 11.)

³² Simple Furniture, *op.cit.*. Also, a selection from Lethaby’s writings collected by Alfred H. Powell (published as Scraps and Scraps in 1956, p. 30) refers to the crafts as being under a “machine lord” much as land comes under the control of a landlord.

³³ “Industry and the Notion of Art” (1926), from the publ. discussion following Lethaby’s address, p. 39, Report of the Seventh Annual Lecture Conference on Industrial Welfare.

In 1915 Lethaby criticized economists for not being practical in their planning: “they are after isolated truths...they have not seen political theory as part of the problem of action”.³⁴ He objected five years later (1920) that the “science” of political economics has made apologies for “the violences of the industrial revolution[?], the tyranny of the great companies, and the destruction of the beauty of our towns.”³⁵ On this later point, urban despoliation, an interesting comment questioning the ability of industrialization to bring true progress is found in one of Lethaby’s manuscripts at Barnstaple entitled “Town Redemption”:

What guarantee have we that if Newcastle were twice as rich it would not be three times as big and four times as gloomy and grimy? The horrors which we in fact did accomplish were done while the vague and visionary people who called themselves economists assured us that we were the wealthiest country on earth. Poverty might restrain violent advertisement, reduce the vulgar splendour of cinema fronts and slow down the insane cutting about in motor-cars.”³⁶

As to the notion presented at the end of the preceding excerpt, transportation devices did not always play a negative role in Lethaby’s characterizations of modern society. There are some passages to be discussed later, which are as favorable as those of Le Corbusier in Vers Une Architecture on such topics. However, another unfavorable one on motor cars is found in one of the collections of Lethaby’s aphorisms residing at the R.I.B.A Library: “The idea of modern life seems to be that some will be motoring the rest making and repairing cars.”³⁷ Railroads in general, more often than their individual components—that is, railroad bridges, terminals, rolling stock—are treated in Lethaby’s writing unfavorably or at least characterized as mis-developed systems. In The Hibbert Journal in 1918, he remarked on the beauty of Oxford, Bath, Brighton, Hastings and other locales in the mid-eighteenth

³⁴ “Political Economy or Productive Economy” (1915), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 193, orig. a paper given to the Arts and Crafts Society, 23 Nov., 1915.

³⁵ “The Center of Gravity” (1920), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 231. (Orig. written in 1920.)

³⁶ Op. cit., (n.d.)

³⁷ #309 from a list at the R.I.B.A. (n.d.). It has not been possible to ascertain whether or not Lethaby himself drove a motor car.

century—before the railroad came. But the railroads “attacked towns” rather than served them.”³⁸ A year earlier, referring to his hometown of Barnstaple at a conference of the R.I.B.A., Lethaby said: “I reminded myself how beautiful were the towns throughout England fifty years ago. In the little town in which I lived no vulgarity had touched it at that time; it was a thing which had grown; it was a work of art and beauty, a work which Turner would have painted. But now it is wrapped round with railways...”³⁹ In his biography of Webb, Lethaby mentioned what he said was the bad planning of railroads for the London area in Webb’s “early” days.⁴⁰ Aeronautical vehicles are less frequently mentioned by Lethaby. The German attack on Britain in World War I, in the form of Zeppelin bombings, must have contributed to the formation of at least ambiguous thoughts about inventions in aviation. In March of 1918, not long after a German attack: “I enclose a very shaky and incoherent letter written on Friday after having been kept up by those air things...”⁴¹

In 1925, in his account of Webb, Lethaby characterized modern society as having come under the sway of “the irresistible steamrolling of machinery.”⁴² Despite his strenuous objections that of and a number of others—all of which were resoundingly ineffectual as to influence on later events—the machine was, indeed, “here to stay.” Lethaby’s attitude changed to one of grudging acceptance and he came to possess a frame of mind which sought the promotion of whatever “benevolent” acts of which machines might be capable. If nothing else, the machine, like drunkenness, he wrote in 1917, could not be

³⁸ “Towns to Live In” (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 33. (Orig. in the Hibbert Journal, p. 33.)

³⁹ Repr. in Form in... (1922) p. 131. Orig. from an R.I.B.A. Conference 24 Jan., 1917.

⁴⁰ Orig. in Lethaby’s series in The Builder, 1925, as found in the repr. in book form, Philip Webb (1935), op. cit., p. 30. In an undated newspaper clipping among Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple (a paraphrasing of Lethaby’s address “Patriotism and Art Production,” sub-titled “The Value of City Rivalries”) is a comment in a similar vein: “It could not...be denied that the railways themselves had for a time at least been largely responsible for the destruction of the once sweet borders of our cities.” (page n.a.)

⁴¹ Letter dated March 9, 1918, Lethaby to Harry Peach (Peach/Lethaby correspondence at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection). Holborn, in The History of Modern Germany, 1840-1945 (1970 ed.), p. 444, described the German Zeppelin bombing attacks on English cities as having begun in January of 1915.

⁴² As in the later book version, Philip Webb (1935), p. 234 (orig. written as a series of articles in The Builder, 1925).

exorcised and had to be accepted.⁴³ The precise point at which Lethaby became more tolerant of the machine is difficult to ascertain, although evidence is available that the change was occurring or had occurred by around the mid-part of the second decade of the twentieth century. The occurrence of this change in attitude at all—considering Lethaby’s position as a leading spokesman of a group deriving its identity from its opposition to the machine would seem to have a significance independent of the time at which the change occurred.

John Brandon-Jones later noted the polarity of positions that developed with regard to the machine issue between Lethaby and other prominent Arts and Crafts leaders of his generation like Ernest Gimson, who did not seem to have adopted a more conciliatory attitude at any point.⁴⁴ Lethaby’s route was the more practicable one: “I fear and hate machinery but I cannot go or use trains and pretend they don’t exist.”⁴⁵ To his friend Harry Peach Lethaby wrote in 1926: “The antagonism between craftsman and manufacturer leads away from the truth that both handcraftsman and the manufacturer are craftsmen, and the fusion of their interest is no Utopian dream.”⁴⁶ Besides the “iron-horse,” there was another product (principally of nineteenth century technological development) which Lethaby is known to have used—the camera. A 1903 letter from Philip Webb to Lethaby mentioned Lethaby’s photographs of Yorkshire so by that time Lethaby must have been using photographic equipment, supplementary to his sketching abilities.⁴⁷ In a letter to Emery Walker, Lethaby wrote enthusiastically of some photos at the offices of the Methodist Recorder: “Now this is what photography can do as a perfect recorder.” Lethaby went on in this letter to propose an idea about the potential usefulness of photography for the designer “with all this

⁴³ “The Foundation in Labor” (1917), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 220. Orig. publ. in the Highway, March, 1917.

⁴⁴ “After William Morris,” op.cit., p. 55.

⁴⁵ A.R.N. Roberts’ William Richard Lethaby (1957), in the section devoted to Lethaby’s aphorisms, p. 66.

⁴⁶ Aug. 29; letter at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, Lethaby/Peach correspondence.

⁴⁷ One of Lethaby’s sketchbooks from 1904 (at the R.I.B.A. Library) also indicates Lethaby’s use of photographs at that time.

vast educational apparatus opening up the possibilities are very great...” His proposal was to create a twenty-five volume set of photos for the designer.⁴⁸

Machines and new technology also made possible other new devices for use in architectural contexts. Lethaby was interested in lighting, for example, and provided designs both for lighting systems fueled by gas and those powered by electricity. In the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society’s show of 1896, Lethaby exhibited a gas-bracket and a gas-pendant which he had designed as well as some electrical fittings.⁴⁹ With the newest mode of illumination, the electric light, Lethaby found encouragement for its utilization even in the practice of his more conservative mentor, Webb. Webb accepted the electric light and Lethaby wrote in 1925 of Webb’s seeking to find the appropriate design form for: “...he saw at once that instead of the rigidity of gas, something fragile and swaying might be obtained.”⁵⁰

Besides following Webb’s leadership in these matters, Lethaby would certainly have been influenced by Shaw. One can recall Shaw’s interest in advanced concrete building systems—brought up in the last chapter. Lethaby indicated support for further development of electric lightning in 1917: “Lighting, again, would furnish ground for much new experiment. Do we realize how we waste electric light in our churches, even in the summer? Our rooms and offices are mostly too dark.”⁵¹ Utilization of electric lighting in Lethaby’s work is indicated in his earliest independent architectural commission, the

⁴⁸ No date on the Walker letter; Lethaby was living at #2 Gray’s Inn (in London) at that time. Lethaby knew Walker from at least 1889 and his correspondence with him stretched at least until Jan., 1922. (Lethaby/Walker letters at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection.) Lethaby’s selection of subjects for photo volumes, not further explained in the letter, were at least fourteen in number: English landscapes, English farmhouses, village churches, flowers, foliage, animals, children, figures (people), ships (no trains, motor-cars, or airplanes apparently) kings’ tombs, ancient sculpture, heraldry, woodcarving, and a foreign series.

⁴⁹ *The Studio* (Dec., 1896), p. 198. The same year, another prominent figure in Arts and Crafts circles, Walter Crane showed his interest in the problem of arriving at a suitable form for products relation to the newly-developed gas lighting systems. Criticizing developments to date and urging a simple, direct approach, he wrote: “anything superadded [to the bare necessities of gas fixtures] was apt to take the unfortunate look of ornamental excrescence because really unrelated and inorganic. The monstrosity known as the ‘gasolier’ rooted itself in the private and public ceiling,” (pp. 121-122, “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings,” *Art in Life*..., 1897).

⁵⁰ In the book version, *Philip Webb* (1935), p. 191. (Orig. in *The Builder*, 1925). Lethaby also saw virtue in Webb’s support of the Sanitary Institute as an act in support of continuing technological development. (As pointed out in “After William Morris” *op.cit.*, p. 53).

⁵¹ “The Spirit of Rome...,” *Architectural Review*, Jan., 1917, Vol. XLI, p. 4.

country house “Avon Tyrell” of 1890. For this commission, he advised his client, Lord Manners, in November of that year: “The putting in of electric wires would I have no doubt be a wise foresight. The fittings also should not I think be very expensive, absolute simplicity in that sort of thing seems much the best.”⁵² Lethaby’s manifestly Arts and Crafts design for the staircase at Stanmore Hall, which he supplied in connection with Morris and Company’s remodeling work there of (1890-1891), shows on the drawings the provision of a groove in the paneling for electric light wires.⁵³

Modern heating was another technological problem of architectural planning about which Lethaby was open-minded from any early date. The mansion at Avon Tyrell appears to have been planned initially with a central heating system. Lethaby referred to the “heating apparatus chamber” in a letter to Lord Manners dated December 6, 1890, and such a chamber is shown in the basement plans for the house.⁵⁴ Lethaby’s church, All Saints, at Brockhampton (1901) described by Robert Macleod in *Style and Society* (1971) as representing a continuation of traditional materials with modern technology, also features a form of central heating.⁵⁵ In the local, contemporary description of the church is included the following

⁵² Letter to Lord Manners, Nov. 5, 1890 (R.I.B.A. Library). Six years later Walter Crane wrote that the new lighting mode had aesthetic possibilities, and also, like Lethaby, Crane valued simplicity in pursuing aesthetic potential. In “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings” (1896), publ. in *Art in Life...* (1897), he wrote in regard to gas fixtures: “Centuries of use had thoroughly united the old systems of oil lamps and candles, lanterns, or cressets, and torch-holders, with charming and appropriate form in metal” (p. 122). Crane said, that inappropriate forms were used when electric lighting first came in, but “the light wire and electric torch [itself]...in its simplest form of pendant string and incandescent, pear-shaped glass, has a certain elegance and suggestiveness...” (p. 123). The affinity for “simplicity” and “plainness” in products of recent technology have, of course, deeper roots in English thinking. In the preceding decade, Oscar Wilde, in an 1882 lecture had said: “All machinery may be beautiful, when it is undecorated even. Do not seek to decorate it. We cannot but think all good machinery is graceful, also the line of the strength and the line of the beauty being one.” (Quoted in Pevsner, *Pioneers*, 1975 ed., p. 27. A commentator on the machinery shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851 wrote in Henry Cole’s *Journal of Design* (Vol. V, 1851, p. 158): “Some sections, especially that of machinery, feeling their own pre-eminence secure have been content to be plain and unpretending. The only beauty attempted is that which the stringent of mechanical science to the material world can supply...” (quoted in Giedeon, *Mechanization Takes Command*, 1969 ed., pp. 359-360). Giedeon, perhaps wanting to suggest Cole’s own affinity to these points of view, remarked that the writer seemed to be of Cole’s “circle.” (Ibid.)

⁵³ Drawings at Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

⁵⁴ R.I.B.A. Library and Drawing Collection; Lethaby/Manners corres. at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection.

⁵⁵ Macleod, *op.cit.*, p. 59. Lethaby’s drawings for All Saints at the R.I.B.A. Collection in London show the system of heating chambers, wall flues, and heating coils. Basil Ward, in his preface to the 1955 ed. of Lethaby’s *Architecture* (1911), remarked about the “attempt to use central heating” in the church (p. vii).

information about the heating (and air exchange system): “The building is to be ventilated on the new system. Cold air will be admitted in three places into four heating chambers, and through the heating chambers it will pass up the wall; and enter the building at the top, whilst the vitiated air will be extracted from the floor level.”⁵⁶

Lethaby’s technical usages cited in the foregoing paragraphs are more interesting in light of his guarded view of technology although the use of hot air systems for buildings was not new, even in 1890. James Fitch pointed out that there was American knowledge of such systems by 1844 and one might reasonably assume familiarity in England by at least that time as well.⁵⁷

Lethaby and the Design and Industries Association

Lethaby’s contributions to the activities of the Design and Industries Association which Julius Posener has described as an English answer to the Deutscher Werkbund, provides some of the most convincing evidence of his change in attitude toward the machine.⁵⁸ Besides allowing himself to take as a point of departure in this regard those elements of Shaw’s and Webb’s professional activity which sanctioned developments in technology, Lethaby could also use Morris (in his later thinking at least) as a starting point. Arnold Hauser in 1938 noted Morris’ perception that it might be well to try to work with machines, rather than against them:

⁵⁶ “A New Parish Church for Brockhampton,” The Ross Gazette, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, 27 June, 1901, p. 4.

⁵⁷ American Buildings, second paperback edition, 1973, pp 117-118. Fitch mentioned in particular Charles Hood’s A Practical Treatise on Warming Buildings by Hot Water (1837) and D.B. Reid’s Theory and Practice of Ventilation (first publ. 1844). The American innovator/writer Orson Fowler (1809-1887), in The Octagon House-A Home for All (1849, revised and republished in 1853) described hot-air furnaces (as had others as well), and made other suggestions for utilizing “progressive” systems such as hot-water furnaces and speaking tubes (op.cit.). The American architect, H.H. Richardson, like contemporary and later Arts and Crafts architects in England is not known for supplying much visual evidence of his interest in new technology and materials. Yet we have, in 1885, his notable experiments with air movement systems for a residence (about five years before Lethaby’s Avon Tyrell) although this system was also for cooling. Less noticed than his massive lithic statements of form is Richardson’s utilization of new iron framing methods for interior supports in such buildings as his Marshall Field Warehouse (1885-87) in Chicago and his interest in designing vehicles of modern transportation (see his drawings for rail car interiors).

⁵⁸ Anfänge des Functionalismus, op.cit., p. 27.

Morris showed Ruskin's prejudices on the subject of mechanical production as well as his enthusiasm for handicraft, but he assessed the function of the machine much more progressively and rationally than his master. He upbraided the society of his time with having misused technical inventions, but he already knew that in certain circumstances they might prove a blessing to humanity.⁵⁹

Similarly, Nikolaus Pevsner contrasted, with an earlier, less compromising excerpt from Morris ("As a condition of life, production by machinery is altogether an evil") to the following: "in his late speeches he [Morris] was careful (and inconsistent) enough to admit that we ought to try to become 'the masters of our machines' and use them 'as an instrument for forcing on us better conditions of life.'"⁶⁰

England's Design and Industries Association was founded in 1915, with Lethaby as a founding member.⁶¹ The emergence of several similar organizations on the Continent was obvious stimuli for bringing this association (the D.I.A.) into being. Already organized, for example, was the Wiener Werkstätte (1903) and later the Wiener Werkbund in Austria and in 1913, a Swiss Werkbund organization. Also, between 1910 and 1917, the Swedish Sjödsforening had been reshaped into a Werkbund-type organization and in Germany there was the Münchner Werkstätten (founded 1897) and at least by 1899-1900, the Deutsche Werkstätten.⁶² Germany's Deutscher Werkbund, the most important in international influence, came into being in 1907.⁶³ The Deutscher Werkbund's contribution in design, along with other early twentieth century German efforts, attracted Lethaby's attention. Basil Ward mentioned that Lethaby visited Germany 1900 to 1914 (he does not say how many times) until World

⁵⁹ The Social History of Art (Vol. IV, "Naturalism and Impressionism"), 1951 printing, p. 118. Orig. 1938.

⁶⁰ Pioneers of Modern Design, op.cit. (orig. publ. as Pioneers of the Modern Movement, 1936). Quote on the evil nature of machine, pp. 24-25, 1975 paperback ed., and the more favorable view of the machine, op.cit., p. 25. Pevsner did not give the original date or source of these quotes by Morris, but gives as his source The Collected Works of William Morris, May Morris ed., London, 1915.

⁶¹ Date of founding as given by Basil Ward, Preface to 1955 edition of Lethaby's Architecture, op.cit., p. xxvi. Martin's thesis on Lethaby (op.cit.) erroneously gives the founding date as 1916, (Posener, Anfänge... (op.cit.), and Pevsner, Pioneers..., op.cit., agree with Ward).

⁶² For contemporary American organizations one might recall, for example, in Chicago the Industrial Arts League (founded in 1899 but disbanded in 1904) and the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society (established in 1895).

⁶³ It can be noted that the next major stage in the evolution of Germany's immensely influential design organizations was initiated by the founding of the Bauhaus, in 1919, four years after the D.I.A. came into being.

War I put an end to it.⁶⁴ Lethaby had been there around 1913, just before World War I, to see the Werkbund's Exhibition in Cologne, as well as to see Alfred Messel's Museum in Darmstadt, and in general, Germany's new "shop-architecture."⁶⁵

Similarities of motive in the founding of the Deutscher Werkbund and the D.I.A. can be noted. In the inaugural address at the Werkbund's founding in 1907 (as quoted by Pevsner): "There is no fixed boundary line between tool and machine... It is not the machines themselves that make work inferior but our inability to use them properly."⁶⁶ Pevsner quoted from an early D.I.A. publication (The Beginnings of a Journal of the D.I.A., 1916) that the D.I.A. was for "accepting the machine in its proper place, as a device to be guided and controlled, not merely boycotted."⁶⁷ The rhetoric of both the German and the English organization indicates that the past conflict between partisans of handcrafts and machine-made products and they both acknowledged the challenge of trying to harness the machine for good purpose rather than abdicating any responsibility for its deeds. Lethaby took an active part in the founding activities of the D.I.A., writing the first pamphlet of the organization and several others.⁶⁸ In his

⁶⁴ "W.R. Lethaby," Design, July, 1957, p. 46.

⁶⁵ Harry Peach, "A Short Address Given..." (1932), op.cit., page n.a. "Shop-architecture," perhaps refers to the potent new industrial architecture of Behrens, for example. The A.E.G. Turbine factory in Berlin of 1909) and of Gropius and Meyer's (for example, Fagus Shoe Factory, Alfeld-on-the-Leine, 1911). Messel had performed, before Behrens, distinguished design work for A.E.G. until his death in 1909. Back in the 1890's, Lethaby was presumably less impressed with the impact of technological progress in German-speaking Europe. He wrote in 1896 ("Of Beautiful Cities," in Art and Life..., 1897, that "above all we must get rid of the grandeur idea of Art. We have only to go to Vienna to see what modern mechanical grandeur will do for a city." (p. 102). Perhaps he was referring in part to the streetcar and inter-urban train systems—for example, the Stadtbahn stations built by Wagner—from 1894-1901.

⁶⁶ Pioneers..., op.cit., 1975, paperback ed., pp. 35-36.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁸ For example, "Art in Workmanship" (1913), publ. in the Imprint in 1913. This was later described as the "first pamphlet of the D.I.A.'s. (See Harry Peach's "A Short Address Given at the Art Workers Guild Memorial Evening," 28 Apr., 1932, entitled also "W.R. Lethaby"). Peach noted three more pamphlets written by Lethaby for Peach's D.I.A.-related Dryad.Handicrafts series. Peach also reprinted Lethaby's Simple Furniture from 1892. The three pamphlets must have included Lethaby's House Painting and Furnishing, Dryad Leaflet #4, dated 30 Mar., 1920.

manifesto-like essay “Design and Industry” of 1915, Lethaby directly proposed the founding of a “Design and Industries Association.”⁶⁹ The reasons given for the Association were that:

- a) Designers and manufacturers have remained [too long and inappropriately] in separate compartments.
- b) The “purchasing public’s” opinion [a third point of view] have been distorted by a craze of antique buying.
- c) The political-economist has ignored “quality as a consideration (“...Adam Smith did not bother about design, why should he?”).
- d) Design critics in the press have allowed personal taste to enter too much into their writing and this has done damage to English industries.

Lethaby called for closer cooperation between the various groups mentioned above (especially the “branches of production and distribution”) and aimed to explain the D.I.A.’s ideals, to the public. He said that experiments in good design in England had been done by a small class of enthusiasts for a small number of connoisseurs, (here, referring, no doubt, to the efforts of Morris and Co. and similar Arts and Crafts enterprises) but that the large manufacturer had not seen the possibilities of adapting these experiments to large-scale production. However, Lethaby continued, England’s foreign competitors had.⁷⁰

Lethaby’s correspondence with Harry Peach around the time of the D.I.A.’s founding shows some candor of discussion between the two prominent D.I.A. activists, as they sought to define the D.I.A.’s relationship to the Arts and Crafts:

Peach to Lethaby: “If D.I.A. only stands for machine industry, I should wipe my hands of it straight off. I feel it goes farther than even Nauman’s address does. The A. and C. failed because it only wanted to save itself, not others.”

Lethaby’s reply: “...I can hardly be expected to agree with your opinion that the A. and C. failed because it only wanted to save itself not others...I want to argue but content myself with reminding you that I have been a loyal master since its foundation and still am.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ This was repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 48.

⁷⁰ The list of reasons and subsequent material in this paragraph are from “Design and Industry” (orig. 1915), as repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 47-49.

⁷¹ Lethaby/Peach corresp. c. 1 Feb., 1916. Letters at R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection. Pevsner in Pioneers..., op.cit., p. 34, pointed to Nauman’s enthusiasm for the machine and new technology, quoting from his writings of 1904.

There is some evidence in the foregoing exchange of a clash of aims between Arts and Crafts proponents and those of the D.I.A. Lethaby was really in both camps. In a later letter, indicating continued friction between Arts and Crafts supporters and the D.I.A. Peach wrote Lethaby: “Could you help to put the A.W.G. and D.I.A. together by writing an article for our [D.I.A.] Journal giving all the mutual points of agreement and let us forget the others [the differences] for a time.”⁷² Two days later, Lethaby replied that Henry Wilson (an Arts and Crafts proponent) had extended the “olive branch” to the D.I.A. but that it had been misinterpreted and a scathing letter sent in response.⁷³ Lethaby urged that the two bodies refrain from attacking each other.⁷⁴

Architects inclined to follow Lethaby’s leadership were, one supposes, brought over by him to a more favorable view of the role machines might play. John Brandon-Jones (a past Master of the Art Workers Guild) recollected in 1970: “Post-war (WWI) difficulties in finding skilled labour combined with financial stringency to drive architects into the use of more and more factory-made components, so we tried to make a virtue of necessity and become enthusiastic about design for machine production.” Lethaby’s talented friend, and fellow architect and designer, Ernest Gimson was not one of those won over. Gimson would not support the D.I.A. even on Lethaby’s urging. At one point there emerged the issue of Gimson’s refusing to work out some simple furniture designs to be utilized in factory production—the intent being to make well-designed objects available at lower prices. Gimson explained his point of view in a letter in 1916:

You see, if I did furniture for machine shops—even though different, one of the results might be (to give a lesser reason) that customers would be satisfied with that and ask for nothing more, and not only that but under the influence of D. & I. pamphleteering they would enjoy

⁷² Peach to Lethaby, 7 Mar., 1918 (R.I.B.A Drawings Collection).

⁷³ Lethaby to Peach, 9 Mar., 1918 (R.I.B.A Drawings Collection).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

the pleasant feeling of giving encouragement to the latest art movement and most sensible and up to date thing in the trade...⁷⁵

Through his support of the D.I.A. and similar activities (F.W. Troup included in his obituary of Lethaby that he had also been a governor of the British Institute of Industrial Art), it was possible for Lethaby to be remembered in the early 1970s as “the great apologist and thinker on the subject of Industrial Design.”⁷⁶

The Limits of the machine—The Machine “in its Place”

Products made by machine could not ever truly be considered “art,” said Lethaby. But such products were likely to attain their highest position in his aesthetic system when they showed clearly their provenance:

Although a machine-made thing can never be a work of art in the proper sense, there is no reason why it should not be good in a secondary order—shapely, strong, well-fitting, useful; in fact like a machine itself. Machine work should show quite frankly that it is the child of the machine, it is the pretence and subterfuge of most machine-made things which makes them disgusting.⁷⁷

This willingness in 1913 to acknowledge the worth of machine-made products, provided one understands their “secondary” status, is repeated in 1920 in the pamphlet House Painting and Furnishing: “Machine work is good enough in its way...”⁷⁸ In a letter Lethaby wrote to Harry Peach in 1926, he provided a proof of the review he had done of John Gloag’s book Artifex: Or the Future of Craftsmanship. It was important, Lethaby wrote in the review, that the author appreciated “the difference of true craftwork—that is, art—from anything that the machine can ever do” but he objected to the fact that Gloag appeared “to

⁷⁵ The quotation and preceding material in the paragraph are from “After William Morris,” op.cit., p. 56.

⁷⁶ Royal College of Art Calendar (1973-74), Section on “The History of the College,” p. 10. (Author not known.)

⁷⁷ Quoted by John Brandon-Jones in “After William Morris,” op.cit., p. 56, from Lethaby’s “Art and Workmanship” (1913).

⁷⁸ Op.cit., p. 3.

promise too much from even the most intelligently driven machine.”⁷⁹ Lethaby stressed in the review that art was not possible without direct human involvement: “Let us do all we can to make the output of the machine as reasonable, shapely, and elegant as possible, but let us also recognize that art will always require the full and immediate contact with and control of vital craftsmanship.” In the review also, Lethaby repeated his caution of 1913 that machine work should not be imitative of hand work, drawing on a quote from Morris, thirty-five years earlier to illustrate the point: “Machine-made paper would do well enough if it did not imitate hand-made deckle-edges and all that non-sense.” A false point of departure when making products by machine could be traced, Lethaby said, to inappropriate efforts at imitation: “The author will observe that machine production took a wrong turning at the first in imitating handwork instead of aiming at production which could be frankly characteristic of the machine.”⁸⁰

In a later work, not long after Lethaby’s death, (Design in Modern Life), John Gloag also emphasized the undesirable results that had been obtained from manufacturers’ mistaken inclination to imitate hand-crafted objects, as well as calling, as Lethaby had in 1915, for close co-operation of manufacturers and designers:

It was very easy for manufacturers in the early days of machinery to overlook the possibilities of the new tool that was put in their hands. They only thought of the machine as an accelerator, as a multiplier. They were obsessed by the idea of quantity and they ignored technique. The machine, regarded primarily as a multiplier was devoted to the imitation of things that had formerly been made by hand, and was never given the opportunity of doing its splendid best. When it was necessary for things to be originated with the aid of machinery it was found that manufacturers, left to themselves with their machines, could only mix up different sorts of imitation. Machine production never came under the control of designers. We have never planned any partnership between designer and manufacturers.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Included in a letter of 29 Aug., 1926, from Lethaby to Peach (at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection). Gloag’s book was published in 1926.

⁸⁰ Ibid. The remainder of the material in this paragraph is also from Lethaby’s proof (his review of Gloag’s book) accompanying the 1926 letter to Peach. The orig. source in Morris’ writings is not given.

⁸¹ Op.cit. p. 22. In this Introduction by the editor, John Gloag wrote: “Manufacturers and designers ought to be partners...” (Op.cit., p. 23).

In Gloag's view, Morris' handicraft revival, started out of a fear that mechanical production meant the extinction of craftsmanship, did not arrest industrial production but only supplied "grist" for the mechanical "mills":

Unfortunately this only gave manufacturers another opportunity for imitation, and within a few years of the beginning of the Morris handicraft revival factories were turning out intentionally rough things of wood and metal, the latter covered with imitation hammer marks. These things were sold under the intriguing label of 'hand-made.'⁸²

In 1927, a letter from Lethaby to Peach substantiates the unwavering attitude about the machine's limitations and "its place" as articulated in 1913: "You seem sometimes to suppose machinery can take the place of art. It can't, it is different. Only recognize this difference and go on improving it by all means."⁸³ Later in the letter, Lethaby responded to (and included in his response) a goal expressed perhaps by Peach with which he could sympathize, and called on Peach to more clearly state that machine work is not "art": "...I see you want to preserve a place for the individual artist 'who can put in that something which no machine can ever hope to attain.' That is the recognition I want and I hope you will be able just to suggest that in your sayings which sometimes suggest that clean mechanism is 'art.'"⁸⁴ This attitude of Lethaby, developed most clearly in the second decade of the twentieth century, of accepting, even promoting, improvements in the sphere of design related to machine production, extended to the end of his life. In his seventies, in a letter of 1929 to Peach, is found such evidence. Writing fancifully of a society dominated by the Design and Industries Association, Lethaby inquired: "In the D.I.A. State should any hand-joy-work be allowed or should it be made criminal, as against the true art of the machine? Mind, I'm a backer of D.I.A. in its place!!"⁸⁵

⁸² Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁸³ Letter from Lethaby to Peach, 5 July, 1927, R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection.

⁸⁴ Ibid. In another letter from Lethaby to Peach, undated but filed with the 1927 material at the R.I.B.A., Lethaby warned: "You seem to have (or think you have?) an interest in the products [of the machine] as 'art.' That I think is all a mistake..."

⁸⁵ Lethaby to Peach, 26 Apr., 1929, R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection. (The passage was also quoted in Peach's talk in 1932 at an A.W.G. Memorial Dinner, "A Short Address...", op.cit.)

Miscellaneous Other Attitudes About Machines Held by Lethaby

Lethaby reiterated Morris' call for the controlling the machines.⁸⁶ This would not be easy because the machine was "out-of-control" and mankind its minions. "Machines have become our masters—we cannot stop the wheels."⁸⁷ Machine production had changed for the worse, in fact. In the early days of their employment, craftsmen still had a role. Now there were only "machine-tenders."⁸⁸ One of Lethaby's solutions was to have people from all callings (M.P.'s, architects, pastors, teachers) undergo a year or two of "manual drill" before being allowed to get into "brain work." This experience, so Lethaby wrote in 1917, might aid in controlling machines before, as he pessimistically put it, "they tear civilization to bits."⁸⁹ On the issue of control, in regard to the development of Garden Cities, a later English architect, E. Maxwell Fry (1899-1987) could make an assessment of *fait accompli*, whereas Lethaby had only "hoped": "The Garden City movement was the last despairing effort to escape from the new industrial life: from the control of the machine. It is doomed. We are at the moment of complete reorganization, in control of the machine, in control of a new way of life."⁹⁰

Collateral, Contextual Views on the Machine

Other minds, in England and abroad, had of course embraced the machine age much more enthusiastically, and earlier than Lethaby. Henry Van de Velde, writing about machines around 1894, predicted: "The powerful play of their iron arms will create beauty, as soon as beauty guides them."⁹¹ Sant' Elia, describing his ideal modern city in 1914 chose the mechanical analogy: "[the city was]

⁸⁶ See, Lethaby, "The Foundation in Labour" (1907), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 220.

⁸⁷ Scraps and Scraps (1956), p. 50. Orig. date of Lethaby's comment not given.

⁸⁸ "The Foundation in Labour," as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 220.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁹⁰ "The Design of Dwellings" by E. Maxwell Fry in Design in Modern Life, *op.cit.*, John Gloag ed., p. 34.

⁹¹ As quoted by Pevsner in Pioneers..., p. 29. Publ. earlier in Van de Velde's Kunstgewerbliche Laienprechtgen, Leipzig, 1903.

...similar to a gigantic machine.”⁹² Le Corbusier, in his essay “Urbanisme” (by 1925) wrote: “The machine gives our dreams their audacity...”⁹³ About the same time (1924) one can note Mies van der Rohe emphasizing that industrialization (including prefabrication) was at the core of modern building.⁹⁴ Gropius, in explaining his “Principles of Bauhaus Production” (1926), talked about the liberating character (as opposed to Lethaby’s enslaving emphasis) of the machine—even saying that the work done by machine was better than that done by hand:

The machine—capable of producing standardized products—is an effective device, which, by means of mechanical aids—steam and electricity—can free the individual from working manually for the satisfaction of his daily needs and can provide him with mass-produced products that are cheaper and better than those manufactured by hand.⁹⁵

The more radical rhetoric of the Swiss ABC—Bertrage zum Bauen in 1928 demanded the dictatorship of the machine; contained in the same issue is the statement, in a manner perhaps gleefully eulogistic in regard to handcrafts: “Reality shows us how far we have already gone today in obeying the dictates of the machine: we have sacrificed handicrafts to it...”⁹⁶

The machine was used also as a metaphor for other components of human environment besides those comparing it to a city as Sant’ Elia had done. Le Corbusier’s famous dictum about “the house as a machine for living” came in 1920, amplified with an appeal for mass-production:

If we eliminate from our hearts and minds all dead concepts in regard to the house, and look at the question from a critical and objective point of view, we shall arrive at the ‘House-

⁹² As quoted by Pevsner in Pioneers..., op.cit., pp. 37-38. Sant’ Elia’s Messaggio was publ. in the exhibition catalog (1914), Nuove Tendenze.

⁹³ Essay printed in La Collection de l’Esprit Nouveau (1925), as repr. in Conrads’ Programs..., op.cit., p. 93.

⁹⁴ See 3rd ed. of G. (Material zur elementaren Gestaltung), as repr. in Conrads’ Programs..., op.cit., p. 81.

⁹⁵ As repr. in Conrads’ Programs..., op.cit., p. 96.

⁹⁶ Repr. in Conrads’ Programs..., op.cit., p. 115. Orig as Issue #4, Vol. 2 appearing in Basle under the editorship of Hans Schmidt, Basle, and Mart Stam, Rotterdam. These thoughts are closely connected also, Conrads tells us, with those of Hannes Meyer (op.cit., p. 115).

Machine,' the mass-production house, healthy (and morally so too) and beautiful in the same way that the working tools and instruments which accompany our existence are beautiful.⁹⁷

Wright's lecture of 1931 downplayed the machine analogies Le Corbusier had used in describing the house (and the linkage Le Corbusier had made between architecture and airplanes). Wright allowed that such comparisons were superficially (but irrelevantly) correct, hinted that there was much more beyond but kept to largely meaningless generalities as to what else there might be:

[Architecture is not]...any more scientific than sentient, nor so much resembling a flying machine as a masterpiece of the imagination...

Consider well that a house is a machine in which to live but architecture begins where that concept of the house ends. All life is machinery in the rudimentary sense, and yet machinery is the life of nothing. Machine is machine only because of life. It is better for you to proceed from the generals to the particulars. So do not rationalize from machinery to life. Why not think from life to machine?⁹⁸

The kitchen was also compared to a machine. E. Maxwell Fry did as much by 1934: "The kitchen must...become a machine-room, a room of kindly, helpful machines, designed to simplify and make work enjoyable."⁹⁹

Engineering and Architecture

The profession most closely identified by Lethaby with bringing new technology to bear on society was engineering. Most of Lethaby's printed comments about engineers and engineering are from about 1910 or afterward. Perhaps, since in the following decade Lethaby adopted a more amiable attitude towards the machine, he was more inclined to consider the related topic of engineering. Sometimes the thoughts he offered were about engineers generally; where they were more specifically directly, they seem (as would be plausible) to have been directed mainly at those branches of engineering mostly

⁹⁷ Notes from *L'Esprit Nouveau* (1920), later publ. as *Vers Une Architecture*(1923), as repr. in Conrads' *Programs...*, *op.cit.* See esp. pp. 60 and 62.

⁹⁸ One of Wright's lectures at Chicago's Art Institute, as repr. in Conrads' *Programs...*, *op.cit.*, p. 124.

⁹⁹ From Fry's essay "The Design of Dwellings" in *Design in Modern Life*, *op.cit.*, 1934, p. 35.

closely connected with Lethaby's own profession, architecture. They were about the civil, structural, and architectural engineering sub-disciplines. References to engineers and engineering are found in his more general works (like Architecture, 1911) but also, in the later years of the 1920s Lethaby devoted some articles more specifically to engineering. For example, there were "The Engineer's Art" in Architecture (July 1923) and the series in The Builder, "Architecture as Engineering" in 1929. Several themes emerge from Lethaby's comments on engineering. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Historically, engineers and architects have been very close, if not synonymous—performing many of the same tasks.
2. Architecture relies to a very important degree on an engineering component. This engineering component in architecture has been of primary significance in architecture in the past and will be so in the future as well.
3. In recent times, there has been a split such that engineering has emerged as a distinct discipline separate from architecture.
4. Modern engineers, like modern architects, have not in general served society well and part of the problem has been with the two professions not keeping in close enough contact with each other.
5. In the future, engineers and architects should work together more closely, for their mutual benefit and for that of society.

The following discussion will expand on the preceding five points and provide some documentation in support.

In "The Architecture of Adventure" (1910), Lethaby observed the close relationship of engineers and architects throughout history, tracing the relationship back to ancient cultures. He pointed out that, in ancient Greece "...their architects...seem nearly always to have been engineers."¹⁰⁰ The engineering "element" in Roman architecture Lethaby recognized was very strong, as well.¹⁰¹ The next year, in Architecture (1911), the engineering aspect of ancient architecture (in Roman times at least) was given yet more importance: "In Roman architecture the engineering element is paramount. It was this which

¹⁰⁰As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 70.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 71.

broke the mould of tradition and recast construction into modern form, and made it free once more.”¹⁰² In the same work Lethaby observed that “most of the famous Roman architects were engineers.”¹⁰³ “Trajan’s favorite architect,” Lethaby wrote, also “built the great military bridge over the Danube.”¹⁰⁴ More generally, “In Rome architects were called machinatores, structores, and magistri, ‘architect’ was a more general term which included workmen.”¹⁰⁵ In 1929, in “Architecture as Structural Geometry” in The Builder, Lethaby cited Vitruvius as an example of the fusion of architectural and engineering roles in ancient times: “He [Vitruvius] was as much an engineer as a builder and he expressed the hope, which I repeat twenty centuries later, that men who are qualified by an exact scientific training would adopt the vocation of architecture.”¹⁰⁶ The same year, in “Architecture as Engineering” in the same periodical, Lethaby made a point to illustrate, as he had in 1911, that ancient Rome’s great architects and the great engineers were the same people:

It appears to me that it was to this body of architectural and mechanical engineers (all Roman citizens) that were entrusted: siege works, with the manufacture and repair of the engines of war; laying out and constructing camps, earthworks, bridges, gates and drains...[in addition to the works more usually identified as architectural].¹⁰⁷

Looking at later historical developments, Lethaby had observed (in 1910, “The Architecture of Adventure”) the commonality of the architect and the engineer in Byzantine times.¹⁰⁸ In Architecture (1911), he listed among the contributions of the Early Christian and Byzantine work such engineering accomplishments as the development of domed construction, the vaulting of basilican-form churches (presumably Lethaby meaning something more than mere adaptation of Roman vaulting technique used

¹⁰²Op.cit., 1955 ed., p. 98

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.,

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁰⁶Op. cit. p. 252.

¹⁰⁷“Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

¹⁰⁸As repr. in Form in... (1922), op. cit. p. 72.

in, for example, construction of thermae), and development of construction techniques allowing columns to carry arches.¹⁰⁹ In “Architecture as Engineering” (1929), Lethaby noted that the engineering emphasis present in Roman architecture seemed to have carried over to Byzantine times.¹¹⁰ So it was also, he said, with the Middle Ages. In “Architecture as Engineering,” he depicted Villard de Honnecourt as an engineer. Lethaby said evidence of this was Villard’s illustrations of how to make a machine for straightening timber houses, those for making siege machines, and those explaining how a sawmill works.¹¹¹

The last period before Lethaby’s own (allowing the broader interpretation common in his day as to its chronological limits), the Renaissance, also showed, Lethaby thought, the inseparability of architectural and engineering practice. Following Ruskin’s lead, Lethaby was not enamored with Renaissance culture. The best result of the Renaissance, he wrote in 1911 (Architecture) was the engineering.¹¹² There was then a scientific spirit.¹¹³ The year before, Lethaby had singled out, among Renaissance personalities, Leonardo da Vinci, who Lethaby noted was concerned with “phenomena” and “principle”; he had engineering interests and was not one interested in (and here Lethaby might have used for contrast, Alberti, Palladio, or any number of other rough contemporaries of Leonardo) the “past.”¹¹⁴ Dürer was noted as the only other architect of the Renaissance who had a scientific spirit.¹¹⁵ His engineering side was evident, Lethaby said, in his structural notes.¹¹⁶ In “Architecture as Engineering”

¹⁰⁹As in 1955 ed., op. cit., p. 118.

¹¹⁰“Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

¹¹¹Ibid. Similarly, see “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 72.

¹¹²As found in 1955 ed., op.cit. p. 182.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴“The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), as repr. in Form in... (1922), op.cit., p. 74. Orig. an address at the R.I.B.A., 18 Apr., 1910.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 77.

¹¹⁶Ibid. Lethaby might have mentioned the engineering feats of Michelangelo, Fontana or Sanmichele or a number of others to reinforce his point about Renaissance architects being involved in engineering activities.

(1929) he again praised the enquiring minds of Leonardo, Dürer and also that of Wren.¹¹⁷ Today's civil engineering project was in the Renaissance, he said, the province of the architect.¹¹⁸

Even in the early nineteenth century there existed, Lethaby wrote, an interchangeability between engineer and architect. He gave as examples some of London's bridges. Vauxhall Bridge (opened in 1816) had had four architects involved: Ralph Dodd, Samuel Bentham, Mr. John Rennie, and James Walker. The Strand Bridge (Waterloo Bridge from 1817) and Southwark (opened 1827) had also involved Rennie's participation.¹¹⁹ Of architectural work also, Lethaby wrote, "the most real and vital work done in the nineteenth century possessed in it some engineering element."¹²⁰ The separating of engineering and architecture was, he maintained, a recent phenomenon.¹²¹ Be that as it may, Lethaby called in 1929, as he had in 1925, for a proper appreciation of the sundered discipline: "the need...is for us to recognize engineering, when it is exercised worthily, for the great art it is... We must understand that engineering in its proper nature is a noble structural art; perhaps in the present age the leading and most typical of our national arts."¹²² Lethaby sought to tie the engineer (the structural engineer at least) to the larger tradition of his architectural genesis by comparing his work to that of the crafts: "Even today construction follows in great part the carpenter's experiments and inventions in the use of beams, braces, and trusses. The structural engineer is for the most part a carpenter of iron and steel."¹²³

Some of Lethaby's comments focus on the desirability (and need) in his own day to keeping the engineering side in architecture, as opposed to architects merely trying to cooperate with engineers as one

¹¹⁷The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid. Lethaby quoted here from his own earlier article "The Engineers Art," July, 1925, Architecture.

¹²¹"Architecture as Engineering - II," The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

¹²²Orig. from Lethaby's "The Engineer's Art," (1925), op.cit. The two quotes are from pp. 119 and 120 respectively, as repr. in "Architecture as Engineering - II" The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

¹²³Op. cit., "Architecture as Engineering," The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 253.

distinct discipline with another. Engineering was essential to architecture, he asserted as early as 1897.¹²⁴ Many years later (1920) he wrote: "...careful engineering was better [would have been better for us?] than conventionally sham poetry."¹²⁵ The next year he observed that architecture was difficult because of the dual nature of the activity, one in which engineering was an important component: "Artist and scientist must work together in the same man at one and the same moment. This is the difficulty of architecture: the man all reason is an engineer, all sensibility a decorator, neither is an architect."¹²⁶ In 1921 as well, Le Corbusier was quoted by Lethaby: "Without the full possession of the qualities of the engineer the artist is not able to use and fructify his *imagination creatice*."¹²⁷ Near the end of the 1920s, in "Architecture as Engineering," Lethaby expressed again his subscription to the dual nature of architecture. He said that one should not look at the architect:

...solely in his character as artist and exponent of aesthetics, forgetting the technical and engineering sides of his activity. [That gives]...the word 'Architecture' the one-sided meaning of aesthetic and artistic design and execution, with a liberal use of sculpture, painting and the minor arts as its auxiliaries. But while it is true that architecture makes use of the arts it is also a science...¹²⁸

A bit later in this 1929 series Lethaby also commented: "The engineering element is necessary to keep the art of building sound, vital and adventurous. When it was separated from 'architecture' ...[it] became an oppressive vehicle [in architectural practice] of mere ostentation."¹²⁹

According to Lethaby, in recent times (c. 1911), engineering had become separated from architecture. This was disadvantageous not only to architecture, but to engineering as well: "The art of

¹²⁴"Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades," Journal of the Royal Society, 1897, p. 855.

¹²⁵"How Shall We Be Classic," The Builder, 21 May, 1920, p. 609. (A review of Langford Warren's book, The Foundations of Classical Architecture (1919).

¹²⁶"Modernism and Design," Part XII: "Architectural Theory and Building Practice," 2 Dec., 1921, The Builder, p. 749.

¹²⁷Ibid. Orig. from L'Esprit Nouveau, the major early publication for the dissemination of Le Corbusier's thinking. Publ. only began the year before (Oct. 15, 1920).

¹²⁸"Architecture as Engineering," The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

¹²⁹Ibid., 8 Feb. segment, p. 301.

engineering [has] advanced so swiftly that it has since broken away from the general art of building to the detriment of both.”¹³⁰ Later remarks continued this unfavorable view (from 1910) of recent engineering activity. In 1918 Lethaby complained: “...it must be said that English engineering has been fully as unsatisfactory as our architecture.”¹³¹ Accusing engineers (excepting I.K. Brunel) of succumbing to base instincts he continued: “...since the early days of railway when Brunel showed some sense of decency, it [English engineering] has run lower and lower as an instrument of exploitation and dividend hunting.”¹³² The year before, at an R.I.B.A. Conference, Lethaby had said, voicing concern about the urban environment, that an effort should be made to induce engineers to “not so readily let themselves out to further spoil our towns.”¹³³ In 1920, in “Architecture as Form in Civilization,” he repeated the charge from 1918 that engineers were parties to exploitation and that they were against “order.”¹³⁴ This kind of indictment, with the railway as a focus, continued in 1925 in “The Engineer’s Art”:

In England, by the ungoverned action of ruling ideas, theory of supply and demand and the like, the engineer became a closely attached servant of the industrial expansion; his mind was cast into the mould of being a willing agent of exploitation for profit. Engineers, during the 19th century, hired themselves out to provide any ramshackle instruments for the profit scramble. Hence such horror as the bringing of railways into old cities (Oxford for instance), Charing Cross and other bridges, and tawdry marine piers, all [without?] the lowest thought of civic dignity, recognition of land beauty, or reverence of their great art—the art of pure structure.¹³⁵

In “Architecture as Engineering” (1929), Lethaby again voiced his appreciation of early nineteenth century British engineering. The architect John Soane was praised for having an engineering sense. Joseph Paxton was favorably treated and again I.K. Brunel was praised. About the latter, Lethaby wrote:

¹³⁰ Architecture (1911), op.cit., as in 1955 ed., p. 182.

¹³¹ “A National Architecture,” Part II: “The Art of Construction”, The Builder, 11 Oct., 1918, p. 229.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ “Architecture and Modern Life” (1917), address at R.I.B.A. Conference, as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 117.

¹³⁴ Orig. publ. in the London Mercury, as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 13.

¹³⁵ Architecture, op.cit., July, 1925, p. 12. A passage in the series on Philip Webb in The Builder of the same year also had an anti-current-engineering flavor as well as being anti-current bridges. (As found in the 1935 book version, Philip Webb, op.cit., p. 194).

“Brunel, in the tunnels and viaducts of the railway work, displayed the sense of order and propriety that English engineers since his day seem to have lost.”¹³⁶ Lethaby fixed the turning point for both the engineering and architectural professions at mid-nineteenth century. Both disciplines thereafter became “professional” and both decayed. Civic dignity was gone, Lethaby said, in late nineteenth century English engineering works.¹³⁷ In 1924, Lethaby gave in to a temptation to use the term “engineering” (as he saw it currently) to describe the wrong way to do building and town planning:

[old building]...was often small and shy, yet always showed the human soul. Its essence was craftsmanship. Modern building in cities has to be planned by experts trained in universal science, who order from a distance executants with whom they have little direct control. Its type is engineering.¹³⁸

Engineers and architects in recent times, despite a strong engineering component in architecture, were split, Lethaby observed, into distinct and different professions and each had suffered after the bifurcation from a lack of working in concert with the other. One can notice, in the writings of the last two decades of Lethaby’s life especially, his urging for the two professions to work symbiotically. Reginald Blomfield in 1932 quoted from what, he said, was “Lethaby’s treatise on Architecture”: “The Arts of the engineer and the architect must draw together in the evolution of modern structures...the modern way of building must be flexible and vigorous, even smart and hard.”¹³⁹ In Architecture (1911)

¹³⁶“Architecture as Engineering-II” (1929), op.cit., p. 301. Another early British engineer, George Stephenson, was also praised. (Ibid.)

¹³⁷Ibid. Things were better, however, in the same period on the Continent, Lethaby allowed, especially in France, Switzerland, and Germany. (Ibid.)

¹³⁸“Architecture, Design, Education,” op.cit., p. 74, as identified in the printed excerpt with Lethaby’s papers at Barnsapple. Address to the International Congress on Architectural Education (“Architectural Education in the Future”). The reference to “science” is uncharacteristically unfriendly here.

¹³⁹“W.R. Lethaby...An Impression and a Tribute,” R.I.B.A. Journal, 1932, Blomfield, p. 12. Although not clear, one might assume Blomfield’s reference to Lethaby’s treatise is to the 1911 publication of Lethaby’s book Architecture (op.cit.).

Lethaby suggested looking to the example of ancient Rome “to learn... to re-identify the architect and the engineer,” although he may have had in mind here to emphasize the engineering roles of architects.¹⁴⁰

Some parallel in emphasizing the interdependence of architect and engineer can be found in Hans Poelzig’s essay of a few years earlier (1906) when he was head of the Academy of Arts in Breslau: “Every architectural work first has to tally with the work done by the engineer—and the modern architect more than any has no right to think illogically.”¹⁴¹ In 1917, Lethaby hoped that each profession might exercise a beneficial influence in getting the other to do better what it did best (or rather what he thought each profession ought to be concentrating on): “...architecture and engineering are closely related, and if we could persuade the engineer to be scientific they might in turn, get us to be truly artistic and to do our work, ‘just so’.”¹⁴² In “Modernism and Design” (1921), Lethaby voiced his agreement with Le Corbusier that the engineer should show the way.¹⁴³ About the same time (1923), Oskar Schlemmer, in the Manifesto for the first Bauhaus Exhibition saluted the engineer in the role Schlemmer foresaw for him in building a modern society as: “the sedate executor of unlimited possibilities.”¹⁴⁴ The theme of mutual architect/engineer cooperation and the resulting benefits was reiterated again by Lethaby in “The Engineer’s Art” (1925):

A drawing together of architects and engineers could not be other than helpful to both; engineers might persuade architects to put away their playthings (orders, styles, ‘proportions’, features, grandeurs, make-believings) and build like men, while architects might suggest to engineers that there is something in the ‘thought of loyalty to an Art which carries farther than the ideas of exploitation for quickest profit.’¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰Op. cit., as in 1955 ed., p. 99.

¹⁴¹From Poelzig’s essay connected with Die Dritte Deutsche Kunstgewerbe-Ausstellung (Dresden, 1906). Repr. in Conrads’ Programs..., op.cit., p. 16.

¹⁴²“Architecture and Modern Life” (1917), as repub. in Form in... (1922), p. 117. In another place in this essay (p. 120) Lethaby also urged that architects cooperate more with engineers.

¹⁴³Part X: “Planning, Composition and Block-Form,” The Builder, 7 Oct., 1921, p. 452.

¹⁴⁴As repr. in Conrads’ Programs..., op.cit., p. 70.

¹⁴⁵From Architecture (July, 1925), p. 120.

In 1929, in the last paragraph of “Architecture as Engineering” Lethaby called yet again for the architect and engineer (and also the builder) to come together.¹⁴⁶

The engineering component present in Lethaby’s architectural practice was fairly limited. His use of new materials (especially concrete) in the preceding chapter and the related desirability of possessing some knowledge of new engineering technology. Large buildings, like the churches Lethaby worked on under Shaw and the one he did on his own, were more likely to bring up questions of an engineering nature than another frequently occurring commission type, the residences Lethaby was involved in designing. The drawings for Holy Trinity Church, Latimer Road, which Lethaby had been occupied with under Shaw show that three “ties” joined the tops of the opposing external buttresses to stabilize the tunnel-vaulted roof of the main sanctuary space, with steel girders encased within the wood-covered ties. Andrew Saint, in his book on Shaw, found this a “daring structure.”¹⁴⁷

However, the development of this structural system and its detailing would not likely have been Lethaby’s design responsibility although his involvement in the project documents his direct exposure to structures utilizing structural steel by 1886. Shaw must have been placed confidence in Lethaby’s structural judgment, at least regarding masonry construction. During the construction of Shaw’s All Saint’s Church, Leek (designed 1884—executed 1885-87, when Lethaby was in Shaw’s office), concern grew as to the structural stability of two arches near the southwest tower. Saint, in his book on Shaw,

¹⁴⁶The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301. Basil Ward, speaking of Lethaby in 1957 at a symposium dedicated to Lethaby (“William Richard Lethaby...,” op.cit.), in a section entitled “The Whole Man,” (Part III) as printed in the R.I.B.A. Journal (April, 1957), concurred with Lethaby’s line of thinking on this matter:

“...both the aesthetic and utilitarian aspects of our [the architect’s] work has suffered long enough from antagonism between architecture and engineering—since Ruskin, architects have been as much at fault as engineers in allowing professionalism and specialism to cause narrowness and ignorance in all fields of building work. It is possible that architects have done more than engineers to widen the schism between art and science. We, and the engineers, at least begin to realise that our two vital activities must go together, if they are to be allowed to play their full and needful part in human affairs. Lethaby made a strong part of this need nearly fifty years ago.” (p. 221).

This last sentence of the foregoing quote may refer to Lethaby’s writings of 1910-1911.

¹⁴⁷Andrew Saint, Richard Norman Shaw, op.cit., p. 289.

reported that the worries were dissipated when: “Lethaby visited Leek and pronounced all well.”¹⁴⁸

Lethaby had his moments of concern about foundation engineering, as his letters about his church at Brockhampton verify.¹⁴⁹

Various objects of engineering skill, the products of modern technology, were singled out by Lethaby for praise. Some of these he spoke of generally, others he named specifically. In either case, by implication or by direct statement, he usually urged that the virtues he saw in these be carried over into architectural works. In Architecture (1911) he acknowledged his awe of ships, bridges, machines and asked why the house should become “so vulgar and pretentious.”¹⁵⁰ “Damp, cracked and leaky ‘architecture’ must give way to houses as efficient as a bicycle.”¹⁵¹ Engineering works were again praised in 1918 in his series of articles called “A National Architecture”:

...although all these modern activities frighten me and I would rather be dealing with rubble and thatch than with concrete and steel...I have seen much which causes one to look again, in great bridges spanning a valley like a meadow, in roofs meshed across with thin threads of steel, in tall factory chimneys, great cranes and ships...¹⁵²

In 1921, in the article series “Modernism and Design,” when Lethaby singled out a half dozen things to praise in contemporary architecture, he included “some excellent factories...fearless but tidy” and London’s Albert Hall. This latter work, designed by an engineer, Francis Fowke, Lethaby described as England’s “best recent ‘monumental work’.”¹⁵³ In 1924 Lethaby lobbied for a “perfecting” of building types:

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 307-308. However, Saint stated that Lethaby was more likely, on this project, to have been “let loose” on the “interior.” (Ibid.).

¹⁴⁹See, for example, Lethaby’s letter to Sydney Cockerell dated 23 Aug., 1902, from Herefordshire and near where Lethaby’s Brockhampton Church was nearing completion. (Cockerell/Lethaby corres. at the British Museum—Dept. of Manuscripts.)

¹⁵⁰Op. cit., 1955 ed., p. 187

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁵²Part IV: “Modern Materials and Methods,” The Builder, 25 Oct., 1918, p. 261.

¹⁵³Part X: “Planning, Composition and Block-Form,” The Builder, 7 Oct., 1921, p. 452.

...including skillful planning, suitable selection of materials, adequate lighting, warming, roofing, efficiency, endurance, economy. I mean a sort of building crystallization, the entering on a line of development like those which have produced the ocean liner, the engine and the aeroplane.¹⁵⁴

More specific praise of British engineering works included Waterloo Bridge in 1896 (“...quite the most splendid modern monument that we have.”) and in 1911, that accorded the Forth Bridge in Scotland, although a contemporary bridge in London, Tower Bridge was, as mentioned, panned.¹⁵⁵ Earlier (1896) Lethaby had written that John Rennie’s Waterloo Bridge was a London structure second only in importance to St. Paul’s cathedral and stressed the importance of preserving it.¹⁵⁶ In “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), Lethaby wrote of the concept of “imaginative reason” and where he had seen it displayed. This involved a list of bridges and other utilitarian structures (both domestic and foreign) and included the Forth Bridge, a concrete railroad viaduct he had seen in 1909, some brick kilns and some oast-houses in Kent.¹⁵⁷ Pevsner pointed out a similar statement of enthusiasm for engineering works made in Germany by the politician Friedrich Nauman in 1904 who had taken an influential role in progressive German building activities. He wrote: “Exactly like Muthesius, and no doubt inspired by him, Naumann speaks of ‘ships, bridges, gasometers, railway stations, market halls’ as our new buildings.”¹⁵⁸ Waterloo

¹⁵⁴“Architecture, Design, Education” (1924), *op.cit.*, p. 74, as ident. in the printed excerpt with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple. Note here the favorable reference to the airplane.

¹⁵⁵“Of Beautiful Cities” (1896), as in *Art and Life...* (1897), *op.cit.*, p. 104, and from *Architecture* (1955 ed. pp. 193-194). Thirty years later, in Lethaby’s introduction to the pamphlet, *The Foundling Hospital and Its Neighborhood*, he had not changed his evaluation of Waterloo Bridge. It was “the most worthy memorial structure in England, and perhaps the finest bridge in the world...” (p. 4).

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 106-107. The bridge (also known as the Strand Bridge), opened in 1817. It was not without its foreign admirers as well. The Italian sculptor Canova deemed this stone construction “the noblest bridge in the world, worth a visit from the remotest corner of the earth.” (As quoted in Martin Hayden’s *The Book of Bridges* (1976), p. 63). Lethaby’s wish for its preservation was not, unfortunately carried out. A new Waterloo Bridge dates from 1945.

¹⁵⁷“The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 91.

¹⁵⁸Pevsner, *Pioneers...*, *op.cit.*, 1975 ed., p. 34. (Quoted by Pevsner from Naumann’s “*Die Kunst im Zeitalter der Maschine*,” publ. in *Kunstwart*, XVII, part 2, 1904, p. 323).

Bridge was again praised by Lethaby in 1919 as being an excellent memorial; Lethaby focused on the fact of its serviceability.¹⁵⁹

But bridges, especially English ones, sometimes were brought by Lethaby to serve as examples of what was wrong with modern engineering. In The Builder in 1918, London's Charing Cross Bridge was brought up in this context, and Lethaby elaborated on his dislike of Tower Bridge: "The failure of English engineering is that it is usually mean and brutal, like Charing Cross Bridge, or, ashamed of itself, it seeks for disguises like those of the intolerable Tower Bridge. Judged by its works rather than its claims to 'science,' our engineering seems often ignorant and impotent."¹⁶⁰ In "The Engineer's Art" (1925), Lethaby maintained that in the last three generations, only the Forth Bridge is "really good" (the first Waterloo Bridge was done slightly before the time period referred to).¹⁶¹ A recent temporary structure across the Thames Lethaby also found appealing and he offered a few thoughts for improving the Charing Cross Bridge:

A rough press print of the large span girder for the temporary bridge next to Waterloo Bridge looks direct and not unpleasant; it suggests to my mind that if Charing Cross Bridge is to be rebuilt or improved we might be well advised to ask for a careful work of the most efficient and energetic type of modern structural engineering, without any overlay or disguise.¹⁶²

Brunel's Thames Tunnel of 1840 (1100' in length) was praised for its simplicity in 1929 in Lethaby's series "Architecture as Engineering". It could be compared to the work of San Gallo (whose engineering work at least, Lethaby admired) and to Wren's.¹⁶³ "It [the tunnel] is utterly different in spirit from the wriggles and foulness which now passes for engineering."¹⁶⁴ Early suspension bridges were again

¹⁵⁹"Memorials of the Fallen" (1919), as repr. in Form in... (1927), p. 60.

¹⁶⁰"A National Architecture," The Builder—Part IV: "Modern Materials and Methods" (Oct. 25, 1918).

¹⁶¹Architecture (July, 1925), p. 120. He also mentioned that a few suspension bridges (Telford's, Brunel's and Stephenson's products, for example, met with his approval.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*

mentioned as having been “clear and direct solutions” but Lethaby said that in later years only the Forth Bridge had “a large scientific sense.”¹⁶⁵ Despite the failure of contemporary English bridge design generally, Lethaby still found in 1929 that engineering was the best part of recent work, singling out, as he had earlier, Albert Hall and St. Pancras station for positive attention.¹⁶⁶

Praise of foreign engineers (European, to be more specific) is not missing in Lethaby’s writings. In Architecture (1911) he advised looking to the Continent for inspiration in matters of engineering: “We must learn from France, Germany, and Switzerland how worthily to finish engineering structures; most of our English works are too crude and raw.”¹⁶⁷ A year earlier, in his list of works to be praised for their “imaginative reason” were two French works—a little iron-framed station (probably a train station) high up in the Chamonix Valley and a new railroad water tower in Metz.¹⁶⁸ In Architecture, Lethaby singled out French and German works for favorable comment—a rail viaduct at Morlaix (France) and a bridge over the Rhine at Cologne.¹⁶⁹ Almost twenty years later, as Lethaby observed the demise of the engineer, he qualified his comment by saying that on the Continent, specifically in France, Switzerland, and Germany, this profession had fared better.¹⁷⁰ Early in the next decade, not long after Lethaby’s death, Maxwell Fry included what were also some of Lethaby’s favorite examples (and one structure Lethaby disliked) in his own brief collection of great engineering examples, used to stress the way in which he thought engineers had supplanted architects in satisfying society’s needs:

...society...demanded for the satisfaction of its wants, buildings and structures of a scale which only these new materials [steel, glass, concrete] could provide. The Forth Bridge, Crystal Palace, St. Pancras Station roof, the Eiffel Tower, and behind these, factories,

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷1955 ed., op.cit., pp. 193-194.

¹⁶⁸“The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), repub. in Form in Civilization (1922), p. 91.

¹⁶⁹Op. cit. (1955 ed.) pp. 193-194.

¹⁷⁰“Architecture as Engineering-II,” The Builder, 8 Feb., 1929, p. 301.

railways, power stations and a myriad of great works, pushed remorselessly, turning architects into a race of peasants, scholars or dreamers, and engineers into architects.¹⁷¹

Science In Architecture

Engineers, of course, are the practitioners of applied science. Lethaby, in conveying his view of what architecture is, or should be, sometimes made reference to the broader realm of science in general. Most of these references made in the 1920s either brought to the reader's attention the notion that architecture is a science as well as an art or, alternatively, called for thinking of the practiced architecture as a kind of science. The two positions do not appear to be completely compatible but it does not seem to have troubled Lethaby.

Scientific method is the attribute of science Lethaby often wished could be applied in architectural activity. In 1910, for example he wrote: "...the living stem of building design can only be formed by following the scientific method."¹⁷² The next year, in Architecture, Lethaby again stated that a "science of architecture" was needed.¹⁷³ Later in his book, a comparison with one of the natural sciences is made: "...we need a true science of architecture, a sort of architectural biology which shall investigate the unit cell and all the possibilities of combination."¹⁷⁴ The works of two prominent men in the biological sciences were held up as examples for their employment of the kind of method that should be applied to architecture:

...the wall, the pier, the arch, the vault, are elements which should be investigated like the lever and the screw. Modern builders need a classification for architectural factors irrespective of the time and country, a classification by essential variation. Some day we shall

¹⁷¹Maxwell Fry, "The Design of Dwellings," essay from Design in Modern Life (1934), p. 34. John Gloag, ed.

¹⁷²"The Architecture of Adventure" (1910), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 95. The impact of the scientist in the modern age was also recognized by Frank Lloyd Wright in this period. In 1901 Wright said: "Today we have a Scientist or an Inventor in place of a Shakespeare or a Dante" ("The Art and Craft of the Machine," 1901, lecture delivered in Chicago, republ. in Mumford, Roots..., (1972 ed., p. 170).

¹⁷³Op. cit., p. 10 (1955 ed.).

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 192.

get a morphology of the art by some architectural Linnaeus or Darwin, who will start from the single cell and relate to it the most complex structures.¹⁷⁵

Lethaby wrote that architectural progress could only come with “unity of effort and agreement on a scientific basis, or an endeavour after perfect structural efficiency.”¹⁷⁶

In “A National Architecture” (1918), Lethaby again maintained that architects should be “scientifically trained” and in 1921 in the “Modernism and Design” article series, “science” was given a prominent place in Lethaby’s prescription for architectural improvement: “The only possible hope [for architecture] is Modernism, meaning by that common sense for the time, science, intelligibility, and building power.”¹⁷⁷ In his biographical series on Webb in The Builder (1925), Lethaby observed that Webb’s contemporaries had attempted wrongly to revive the Gothic style rather than perfect a science of modern building.¹⁷⁸ Webb himself, Lethaby said, by practice if not directly by theory, showed the way, in emphasizing a scientific approach in architecture. Commenting on Webb’s suggestion for a National School of Architecture (which would emphasize contact between architect, builder, and craftsmen and would address the architect’s need for to acquire workshop experience) Lethaby wrote: “All this, it appears to me, could hardly be bettered, except that the need for definite scientific training, such as Webb tried to acquire at geological lectures and the Sanitary Institute is not clearly expressed...but doubtless it is implied in his suggestions...”¹⁷⁹

In the later series in The Builder (“Architecture as Engineering”) in 1929, Lethaby called upon an earlier architectural “colleague” in support of a scientific architecture. Vitruvius, he wrote, had regarded architecture as a science. From Hadrian on, great architects “won their laurels with vaulted buildings

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 192-193.

¹⁷⁷Part II: “The Art of Construction,” The Builder, 11 Oct., 1918, p. 229, and Part VII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” The Builder, 2 Dec., 1921, p. 751.

¹⁷⁸As found in the 1935 book version, Philip Webb, p. 63.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 83. A more wistful passage concerning science occurs near the beginning of this as he described London at the time Webb and Morris moved there: “Science sometimes seemed to offer the hope that it might be used for amelioration rather than for violent exploitation.” (1955 ed., p. 3.)

...their peculiar [Roman architects'] merit consisted in daring scientific construction, and skill in calculating resistance rather than in their decorative invention."¹⁸⁰ The year before, in the series in The Builder "Architecture, Nature and Magic," Lethaby wrote of salvation through science, characterizing science as the "magic" of our time.¹⁸¹ For Lethaby, a scientific approach in building did not necessarily mean new materials, however—as he pointed out in a reference to Le Corbusier in 1929: "M. Corbusier has called houses 'machines to live in,' and the thought is suggestive; but a reasonable building is not necessarily a series of boxes or a structure of steel. The most scientific and sensible building for given conditions might still be of brick and thatch."¹⁸²

Remarks about the role of science in architecture were sometimes included by Lethaby in stressing architecture's dual identity as both art and science. In "The Education of the Architect" (1917) he said that thinking of art and science as polar opposites was a waste of time: "There is really no opposition between art and science. Show me your art...and I will show you your science."¹⁸³ Lethaby equated art with the active side of life, science with the contemplative or passive. But only science could be taught, so perhaps one would be led to think, based on this, that for Lethaby it would have much larger implications in architectural education than art, which he defined (not completely convincingly) as "the works whereby we show our science."¹⁸⁴ Although Lethaby did think science and its applicative processes (engineering) should be stressed more in architectural education he had in mind (as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter XIII) a type of training incorporating much more than that which could be

¹⁸⁰Feb. 1, 1929, p. 252.

¹⁸¹As found in the postum. republ. of this, Architecture, Nature and Magic (1956), p. 147. (Orig. publ. serially in 1928 in The Builder.)

¹⁸²"Architecture as Engineering," The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252. In this piece, the role of science in house construction was also emphasized, with doubtless far different ends in mind for Lethaby than for Sant'Elia in 1914, when the latter wrote of "creating the Futurist house according to a sound plan, of building it with the aid of every scientific and technical resource..." (from the catalogue for Antonio Sant'Elia's and Mario Chiattoni's Milan exhibition of 1914 for the Citta Nuova, as repr. in Conrads' Programs... (op. cit., 1970 paperback ed., p. 35).

¹⁸³Originally delivered at an R.I.B.A. Conference, 2 May, 1917. As found in Form in..., 1922, p. 123.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

accomplished by “teaching” in the academic sense. In 1929 in “Architecture as Engineering” he defined architecture as being both science and art.¹⁸⁵ Webb’s work, Lethaby had written admiringly in 1925, combined science and poetry, giving Webb’s country house “Clouds” (1881), as an example.¹⁸⁶ Basil Ward, in his appraisal of Lethaby in the magazine *Design* (1957), recognized the effort of Lethaby to move the activities of “science” and “art” closer together: “He saw the weak points in the synthesis of our industrialized society—specialization and the division between art and science and he was persistent in saying that science was not the enemy of art.”¹⁸⁷

More Precise Remedies Through Architectural Education

As a prominent architectural educator Lethaby had many ideas as to how the training of an architect might be improved. A noticeable ingredient in his ideal path toward architectural competency came to include, especially after the turn of the twentieth century, an emphasis on science and engineering. Basil Ward wrote of Lethaby in 1957: “In the first two or three years of the new century, he saw that ‘taste and design and all that stuff’ were not enough and that he needed knowledge of ‘engineering...mathematics and hard building experience.’”¹⁸⁸ Lethaby’s conviction as to the importance of this emphasis came from his own experiences in architectural practice. Ward in 1957 noted the shortcomings in knowledge Lethaby came to feel regarding the changing state of the building art that: “...there was a branch of knowledge which was closed to him and he knew it...He realized that he was not [?] equipped to deal with the new problems arising out of developments in building engineering and the new demands of expanding industrial production.”¹⁸⁹ Lethaby experienced worry enough, if we may judge by a letter he wrote to his friend Sidney Cockerell from Hereford in 1902, in dealing with the problems of traditional

¹⁸⁵*The Builder*, 2 Dec., 1921, p. 749 and 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

¹⁸⁶“Philip Webb,” *The Builder* (1925), as republ. as a book by the same title, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁸⁷“W.R. Lethaby,” *op.cit.*, p. 46.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*

stone construction; in August of that year, Lethaby told Cockerell of his anxiety concerning the foundations of his church at Brockhampton, then under construction. He asked Cockerell to keep knowledge of these concerns to himself and apparently, because of his worries, decided to cancel some travel plans to go to France:

I am passing through a time of great anxiety relative to the little church I have been doing near here, by labour directly hired and no other responsibility than my own. I have muddled and made mistakes on a scheme which only provided for success...

Now the foundations seem to me may be inadequate and for weeks my soul and frame has been quaking. I am afeared of all sorts. Hence this address [in Hereford]. Hence no France. Hence just now I am a garden of just apprehension. Don't say to others.¹⁹⁰

Lethaby wrote Cockerell from London almost two months later that his concern had not abated much:

No, I am still very waitingly anxious about my church. The foundations were going [to] pot at just the time I was preparing to go off for the general convention [it is not explained what convention this was], settlements have commenced and the question is how much will they go on? It's all the worse that I had no builder but recommended direct building under a sort of Blow.¹⁹¹

Lethaby, in subsequent writings, used insight drawn from his own uncomfortable personal experiences in constructing buildings to reinforce his call for including engineering components in architectural education. In a letter to Cockerell of 1907: "If I were again learning to be a modern architect I'd eschew taste and design and all that stuff and learn engineering with plenty of mathematics and hard

¹⁹⁰Letter from Lethaby to Sydney Cockerell, 23 Aug., 1902 (British Museum collection).

¹⁹¹Letter from Lethaby to Sydney Cockerell, 13 Oct., 1902 from London (British Museum collection). It is difficult to speculate on what problem in the foundation construction caused the difficulty—whether a misjudgment about the nature of the firmament or inadequate sizing the footings. (Unusual for that time was the covering of the nave with concrete. This might have added an unusual amount of dead load compared to more traditional modes of construction). A disadvantage of the Arts and Crafts commitment to involve the architect directly in the building (i.e. no contractor to share the liability) is also illustrated. The two passages just cited from letters show Lethaby's propensity for worry—perhaps overmuch—about the buildings he was involved in constructing. This inclination could have been a factor in his early abandonment of architectural practice. Following his commitment to close involvement on the part of architects in the actual construction of buildings, Webb had utilized the services of a younger, like-minded architectural colleague (Detmar Blow) to supervise on-site work. Lethaby had done the same at Brockhampton, working with Randall Phillips. This is why Blow's name is mentioned in the excerpt.

building experience.”¹⁹² He emphasized in 1921 that if he could do his own architectural training over again, he would “get all the engineering training I could absorb and they would give.”¹⁹³ And, late in life (1929) the same reference to his personal example was given by Lethaby to reinforce the importance of technical knowledge, although the traditional concerns of his arts and crafts background are also included: “Now I see that I should have worked at mathematics, engineering and practical building, while preserving reverence for nobility of workmanship and the deep beauty of nature.”¹⁹⁴

Sometimes, Lethaby’s urging to study engineering was coupled with an anti-historical remark. In 1911 (Architecture) he advised architects not to study monuments, but steel and concrete construction, materials and engineering.¹⁹⁵ This advice appears to conflict with Lethaby’s references to look to the past for inspiration about engineering in architecture or, more generally, how we may learn from a “proper” study of the past. Perhaps he meant to caution against a dry academic study of past “styles” and ornament.” One can notice, occasionally, published resistance to Lethaby’s views on this. In The Builder, Jan. 1921, H. Bagenal charged in reaction to Lethaby, without however, saying much to convince the reader otherwise: “It is useless to suggest in a vague way that the younger men are all in danger of becoming archaeologists and that they have only to turn about and seek to become engineers.”¹⁹⁶

At least partial co-education of engineers and architects, Lethaby suggested, would be helpful to the training process in both. In 1921, he pointed out that in Britain (and France, too) the two professions were separated “by a wall,” but he praised Germany: “Modern schools have been cast in the ancient moulds of

¹⁹²Repub. in Friends of a Lifetime, op.cit., p. 130. Ward referred to this passage in the Epilogue he wrote for the 1955 ed. of Lethaby’s Architecture. Three years after Lethaby’s letter to Cockerell, the study of structures was emphasized in advice Lethaby gave to the R.I.B.A. on the subject of what architecture students should study. Vaulting and French railway stations were cited as specific topics worthy of study. (“The Architecture of Adventure,” 1910), as found in Form in... (1922), p. 92.

¹⁹³Part IX of “Modernism and Design”: “Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture,” The Builder, 2 Sept., 1921, p. 288. In his 1925 biographical series on Webb, Lethaby emphasized the need for scientific training in architecture and that architects should know mathematics. (As in 1935 book ed., Philip Webb, op.cit., p. 83, orig. publ. 1925.)

¹⁹⁴“Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, 1 Feb., 1929, p. 252.

¹⁹⁵Architecture, op.cit., 1955 edition, p. 9.

¹⁹⁶“Modernist Tendencies and Victorian Criticism-A Reply to Professor Lethaby,” 21 Jan., 1921, The Builder, p. 92.

the university...Engineers and architects should to some extent be educated together. In Germany the Technischen Hochschulen open careers to engineers and architects indifferently.”¹⁹⁷ In some comments from 1924, “builders” perhaps replace architects in the suggestion for co-matriculation with engineers but the basic thought is the same—that is, it will help the two occupations to draw together, partly through shared educational experiences:

As I see the problem, there are two great ambitions before us: To be better builders, and to be better structural engineers. There are two main approaches: (1) From the side of workmanship, the knowledge of materials and methods; (2) From the side of science, mathematics and books. These two paths, however, must be drawn together; the scientific man should go through as much shop drill as possible, and the practical craftsman must have book knowledge too. Art and Science have to be reintegrated. I should like co-education with builders and engineers.¹⁹⁸

This chapter has discussed first Lethaby’s attitude toward the “machine,” in his earlier years, the unsympathetic position of the Arts and Crafts Movement. The Movement was, after all, founded on reaction to technology. Second was explored Lethaby’s eventual acceptance of a role for the machine after the turn of the twentieth century. Even after accepting the machine as capable of doing good in society, Lethaby continued to insist that there was an important difference between objects made by machine and objects made by hand by artists and craftsmen. The latter category he continued to stress as superior. Only objects in that category were eligible to be considered art and that showed one of the fundamental limits for Lethaby of machine-made objects.

As Lethaby accepted the machine, he talked more about the potential of engineering in service to modern society. Engineers had been, in the great works of the past, an essential factor in architecture and he saw them to be equally essential for the present and future. The splitting off of engineering as a distinct

¹⁹⁷Part XII of “Modernism and Design”: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” The Builder, 2 Dec., 1921, p. 749. An earlier increment in the series (1 Apr., 1921) praised certain aspects of the French system of architectural education—specifically visits to “yards” (engaged in the fabrication of building materials?) and academic courses in mathematics, applied mathematics, and theoretical and applied mechanics. (Part IV: “French and English Education,” p. 409.)

¹⁹⁸“Architecture, Design, Education,” R.I.B.A.J., 1924, under the heading of “Architectural Education in the Future,” International Congress on Architectural Education, p. 76, as ident. in the printed excerpt kept with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstable.

discipline, which Lethaby saw as having occurred in the nineteenth century, caused a diminishment in that period in the quality of architectural work. For a time in the more recent past architectural work had been pursued too independently of engineering considerations. Engineering during this time had suffered also. For his own day forward, Lethaby stressed mutual cooperation (and some mutual schooling) for architects and engineers.

Lethaby voiced his faith not only in the prospects for engineers to contribute to improvement in the building arts and for society-at-large but also in the broader prospects of “science” itself. Also, the “scientific method” should be applied more assiduously to tasks pertaining to the building arts. Lethaby’s greatest contribution in contemporary architectural dialogues about the role of machinery and engineering in the activity of building, was to act as a bridge. He helped join together those characteristics of modernism resident in the Arts and Crafts point of view, which sought out simplicity and directness in building, eschewal of irrelevant ornament and “falsity,” with other aspects of “modern” which orthodox Arts and Crafts thinking could not embrace, such as a willingness to experiment with new technology and the utilization of machines and new building materials such as iron and reinforced concretes.

Lethaby’s views on the machine and the various contemporary works that engineering had produced - the railroads, train stations and bridges, for example - certainly contributed to his outlook about the built (and the natural) environment and to his thinking about towns and urbanism. Lethaby’s thinking on these last mentioned subjects will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

PROBLEMS OF ENLARGED ARCHITECTURAL SCOPE—TOWNS AND ENVIRONMENT

Subjects Treated in this Chapter and Sequence of Treatment

This chapter will first present some of Lethaby's views on the importance of the environment for society, his emphasis on the role he believed architecture plays in the environment, and the general outlook (sociological and political) upon which these views are based. Next discussed will be Lethaby's appraisal (mostly critical) of the state of urban life in Britain in his time and then Lethaby's prescriptions (both general and specific) for a better environment and a better urban life. As part of the treatment of Lethaby's ideas for ameliorating the urban and environmental circumstances of his time, Lethaby's comments about inspirational "prototypes" from the past and from contemporary foreign sources will first be considered, then his other ideas, arranged chronologically. Last, some of Lethaby's specific ideas about planning will be treated.

Interconnectedness and Obligations

For an architect of his generation Lethaby devoted an unusual amount of attention to issues concerning urbanism and the environment. When one considers Lethaby's eclectic interests and his belief in the "interconnectedness" of things, this becomes perhaps more understandable. Part of an architect's skill lies in the ability to coordinate or interconnect a diverse array of operations associated with building. An important part of Lethaby's contribution has to do with his interest in wider parameters of "interconnectedness" than one would normally expect from an architect. Harry Peach said about Lethaby the year after his friend's death: "What he taught us was that life and all its aspects were part of a whole and not made up of watertight compartments. Whether it was business, art, conduct, they all had to fit in together if we were to build up a fine and ordered civilization."¹ Architects, Lethaby emphasized, had their particular responsibilities in the "building up" referred to in the preceding quotation and, as he wrote

¹ "A Short Address Given at the Art Workers Guild Memorial Evening, 28th April, 1932" (1932), TS, p. 12. (Also entitled "W.R. Lethaby," p. 88.

in 1917, they must consider their duties not only to the individual employees but to a larger patronage—to the city as a whole.² A similarly broad view of the architect's obligation was given in another of his writings of the same year wherein Lethaby stated that architecture was “concerned in the main with the better ordering of city life, and the stimulating of civic spirit.”³ Three years later, in 1920 (“Architecture as Form in Civilization”) he also stressed the relationship of cities and culture (cities were “reservoirs” of culture) and wrote of how the architectural environment affected our psychological well-being.⁴ Further, of people would react to architecture was a “normal” condition of the “urban mind”—architecture was the urban environment or a good part of it.⁵ The interrelationship of people with the society they had constructed is mentioned in Lethaby's talk “Towns and Civilization” (no date available) as this paraphrasing from the Daily Mercury (Leicester) shows: “In the course of his lecture Professor Lethaby said that the towns and cities were not merely houses the population built for themselves, but the method of living in them. The outward form of the city was always re-acting backwards on the inner soul of the makes and revealing the form of life...”⁶

In Lethaby's 1922 introduction to the pamphlet Simple Furniture, a reprinting of his much earlier essay (1892) in Plain Handicrafts, the interdependency of things was also stressed:

The end of all civilization is to extend control over our lives and circumstances, that the life of each—the life of the least as of the greatest—may be shaped to more beautiful ends. For one thing so depends on another, that not a single life can be thoroughly beautiful until everything about life is as beautiful as we can make it.⁷

² “Architecture and Modern Life,” (1917), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 119.

³ “The Spirit of Rome...,” Architectural Review (Vol. XLI, Jan., 1917), p. 3.

⁴ Op. cit., as repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 2 and 6. A variant of these thoughts by Lethaby, published in The Builder (Jan. 15, 1932) in “The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby,” is: “Unless our towns are cultured, our children will not be well-nurtured: cities are large cradles,” p. 132, original date not given.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶ N.d. or page available (among Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple).

⁷ Dryad Handicrafts publication, page not avail.; the 1892 volume publ. by Percival & Co.

In the 1920 “Architecture as Form in Civilization” essay, another interesting idea appeared, one that has ramifications for architectural preservation also. That was that, in some ways, what has been built in cities belongs to those who “experience” this as well as to those who own the structures.⁸ In Lethaby’s “Old buildings and the Land” (1930), he articulated more strongly than in the 1920s the notion that “private” works (buildings) in a city have an obligation to the public:

We say: my house and garden, my neighbourhood, my county and country: they are possessed by us, they are our property

...I always feel that horrible advertising hoardings [signboards], and untidy motor stations are a form of violent assault, although they may be on private land and I am only passing along the road. Private they may call themselves, but in making themselves public they have no right to smack my face and I resent it. The fact is, we have such claims in regard to anything which we are compelled to see that this land and public roads should not be used in such ways. It may be a trespass for me to go on private land, but it is also a trespass for the owner to annoy me on the road, so there!⁹

Influence of Lethaby’s General Outlook on His Views on Urbanism

Reginald Blomfield wrote in 1932 (“W.R. Lethaby—An Impression and a Tribute”) that Lethaby always approached architecture not as an architect but as a socialist—an innocent socialist, that is.¹⁰ The value of this observation as praise as well as its correctness may be questioned but it is true that, indeed, Lethaby’s political and social beliefs bore on his views on urbanism and the environment, as they did on other issues. A few of Lethaby’s more general views, which may be relevant to his attitudes about how he believed cities ought to be, are offered in the following paragraphs.

As to Lethaby’s early views, one can note in his 1885 sketchbook, the negative notations about private property and wealth:

The rich are robbers and all things should be in common (St. Chrysanthemum).

⁸ As found in Form in... (1922), p. 9.

⁹ Home and Country, September, 1930, p. 47.

¹⁰ “W.R. Lethaby...An Impression and a Tribute” (1932), p. 10 of 24 p. excerpt from R.I.B.A.J., Vol. 39, No. 8. Orig. a paper read by Blomfield at the R.I.B.A., Feb. 1932.

Private property is the offspring of usurpation...
Iniquity alone has created private property, (St. Clement).¹¹

Thus Lethaby subscribed to these views in his twenties and harbored dissatisfaction with the world Capitalism had built. From such Lethaby's desire to criticize contemporary urban conditions may have been fueled. In "Cast Iron" (1890), Lethaby wrote that our "modern" building problem was due partly to our "system" and much later (1928) that one of the problems of our time was the way that society was organized.¹² In an undated letter to his friend Harry Peach, Lethaby expressed concern about the buildings in the Bloomsbury area of London (and London in general) being unable to withstand the "racket and the winding up of the capitalist machine."¹³ Dissatisfaction with the current state of society generally seems to be hinted at also in a comment made in 1906 to his friend Sydney Cockerell in regard to whether he should accept the post of Surveyor to Westminster Abbey: "Did [should] any 'anti-things' [against the Establishment?] ought to take such posts? I don't mean anti-scrape for that might be put in evidence, but anti-things as they be."¹⁴ In 1905, in a somewhat earlier letter to Cockerell, Lethaby referred disapprovingly to England as "imperialist" and called his country a "parasite nation."¹⁵ "Class" entered into urban problems also. He alleged in 1918 ("Towns to Live In") that employers were free (by dint of their economic status) to go abroad and therefore did not concern themselves with English towns.¹⁶ The work of the artisan had not fared well, he thought, in the present scheme of things: "The arts of the

¹¹ Sketchbook at Barnstaple.

¹² "Cast Iron and Its Treatment for Artistic Purposes" (1890), Journal of the Society of Arts, 14 Feb., p. 227 and Architecture, Nature and Magic (1956), p. 145, orig. appearing serially in The Builder in 1928.

¹³ Lethaby to Peach, R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, n.d.

¹⁴ Lethaby to Sydney C. Cockerell, Jan. 17, 1906 (from British Museum Department of Manuscripts, Correspondence: 1894-1908).

¹⁵ Lethaby to Sydney C. Cockerell, Sept. 25, 1905 (from British Museum Department of Manuscripts, Correspondence: 1894-1908).

¹⁶ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 24.

workman have withered up under the conditions of modern life in [a] society which thinks itself superior.”¹⁷

“Styles” of architecture had political associations for Lethaby. In his biographical series on Webb (1925) in The Builder he wrote of the extreme inappropriateness of the Baroque Revival because of existing poverty.¹⁸ As discussed in Chapters II and VII, some past periods in architecture had for Lethaby (following Morris) unpleasant sociological connotations. In Lethaby’s biographical work on Webb, the Renaissance as it had developed in other countries was described as part of a scheme to divide off “gentility from servility” and in England, Lethaby said, Italian Renaissance art became a badge of superiority; unsavory elements of elitism were introduced as workers were, as a consequence, submerged and degraded in their jobs.¹⁹

Lethaby’s Criticisms of Contemporary Urban Conditions—Early Views (to 1900)

In his early essay (“Of Cast Iron”), Lethaby already had begun to offer his characterizations of contemporary urban life in solemn tones. He wrote in 1889 of “the everyday ugliness to which we have accustomed our eyes, confused by the flood of false taste, or darkened by the hurried life of modern towns in which huge aggregations of humans exist, equally removed from both art and nature and their kindly and refining influences.”²⁰ A few years later (1896), specifically in regard to London, Lethaby commented despairingly of the city’s size and disorder: “Coming to modern London, I must confess that my heart fails me at the enormousness—the enormity of it.”²¹ Later in the essay he wrote: “At present, London is as structureless as one of its own fogs.”²² Also in the essay (a bit earlier) Lethaby commented:

¹⁷ House Painting—Ancient and Modern (n.d.), p. 5.

¹⁸ As publ. in the book Philip Webb (1935), p.85, footnote, earlier a series in The Builder, 1925.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 64.

²⁰ In Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society’s Catalog of the Second Exhibition (1889), p. 9.

²¹ “Of Beautiful Cities,” Of Art and Life... (1897 publication of the lecture given the previous year in connection with the Annual Meeting of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society), p. 99.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

A half-hundred square miles, once wood and corn land, roofed over, where we grow sickly-like grass under a stone, intersected by interminable avenues all asphalt, lampposts, pipes and wires; a coil of underground labyrinth which Dante might have added to his world of torment—the Inner Circle: a gloomy sky above, from which falls a sticky slime of soot: public pageantry reduced to the two shows of the 5th and 9th of November: Gardens which seem to imitate stamped zinc—such are the characteristics of modern London.²³

He continued: “Little good it serves to wail or rail, yet at times the most of us must shiver with despair, and examine chances of escape like creatures untamed to a cage, longing for the time when the weeds and flowers biding their time under the paving stones will again expand to the rains and wave in the breezes.”²⁴

Perhaps someday, Lethaby wrote in one of his most telling indictments of London in the 1890s, things will change if people realize it need not be as it is:

The time will surely come when men will tire of perfecting means to mean ends—the wasting of life for the killing of joy. Surely these telegraph ropes and iron bridges need only exist as long as they amuse people

...if we will only recognize how ugly London is, even amongst modern cities, and clear ourselves of the notion that just it is normal, and that everything is funny which isn't like Oxford Street or Mile End Road.²⁵

Lethaby's Criticism, Continued—1900-1920

In 1911 (in Architecture) Lethaby charged that big cities in England fell short compared to many “second-rate” towns on the Continent and two years later provided this gloomy assessment of both large and the small English towns:

Not everything is right with the internal ordering or the external aspect of our big towns; there is not only a London question, but a Leeds question, a Bristol question, and a

²³ Ibid., pp. 99-100.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 100-101. Trenchant observations, similar to Lethaby's, on existing urban conditions are also found in the same anthology. One can cite Reginald Blomfield's essay “Of Public Spaces, Parks, and Gardens” and Walter Crane's “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings.”

Wolverhampton question. But even such towns as these have some quality, if only that of serious awfulness which sets them above the somnolent futility of smaller places...²⁶

In a theme to be taken up many more times in the future, Lethaby continued, railroads and engineering were blamed for town ills.²⁷

In 1915, in his essay “Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn From It,” Lethaby commented on the results of misdirected city-improvement efforts in London and mistaken goals:

The academic improvers of London are too apt to want to begin improving by pulling down some of the finest things we have, like the terrace in front of the National Gallery, or the Nelson Column. Our students are brought up to vain idealistic schemes of out Haussmanizing Haussmann. We have no steady stream of opinions formed on everyday minor improvements, like the necessary putting in order of the underground stations which I travel by.²⁸

In another writing, also from 1915, Lethaby told of an Austrian visitor who had come to England, motivated by news on the Continent of England’s recent architectural advances and of the visitor’s subsequent disillusion upon seeing the overall environmental context which made the “advances” seem inconsequential:

My Austrian said he had come to England as the motherland of the Arts and Crafts, but he was disappointed with what he had seen: the untidy streets, miserable railway stations, inefficient architecture, were entirely different from what he had been led to expect from the fame of [the?] Arts and Crafts which he had come to inspect.²⁹

This latter piece which focused on what Lethaby saw as differing perspectives on economics, questioned whether economists had taken into account aesthetic considerations in their monetary calculations. Had

²⁶ Architecture (1911), as found in the 1955 repr., p. 189.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ First given as an address to the Architectural Association, Jan. 15, 1915 (repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 103.

²⁹ “Political Economy or Productive Economy,” originally for the Arts and Crafts Society, Nov. 23, 1915 (and repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 198). A contemporary private comment in the same vein is found in Lethaby’s letter to Charles Hadfield on Oct. 15, 1915: “The one thing worth doing for us it seems to me is to tell people the uncivilised character of our towns—dirty, disorderly, dreary dens.” (Lethaby/Hadfield letters at the R.I.B.A. Library, London.)

economists asked if it “pays” for towns to be good places to live?³⁰ In a related comment (1910) in The New Age Lethaby asked: “Won’t someone interested in the formal ‘economic’ way of looking at things tell us something as to the relation between ‘cost’ and beauty of the city?”³¹ And from the manuscript “Town Redemption” (no date) comes the suggestion that current urban ills, ironically, might have been allayed, had the country not grown so rich: “The horrors which we in fact did accomplish were done while the vague and visionary people who called themselves economists assured us that we were the wealthiest country on earth.”³² In 1916, in “Town Tidying”, Lethaby again cited railways (especially stations and railroad advertisements) as a particular problem and the next year called railway stations the worst in the world.³³ The new tube stations also were draughty and dirty and ugly wires marred the streetscape.³⁴ Lethaby also lamented in 1917 the current state of a smaller town in which he had once lived (perhaps referring to Barnstaple), a town also suffering partially from the effects of the railways.³⁵

No architecture, Lethaby wrote in 1917 (“Education of the Architect”), could mean anything while English towns were in their current shape.³⁶ The same year in “Architecture and Modern Life” he noted that “fine design and art and style,” as talked about in theory, were lacking in real English towns such as London, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, and Bristol.³⁷ More specifically on the subject of public spaces in London, Lethaby observed in the same address that the west-central squares, though pleasant forty years ago, were now run down and vulgar. “Our few circuses” (such as Ludgate and Piccadilly) were

³⁰ Ibid., p. 193.

³¹ Lethaby’s comments on London publ. in The New Age, 11 August, 1910. (Article title and page n.a.).

³² MS; with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple. Probably early 1917; n.p. avail. Prob. For a lecture delivered at Newcastle.

³³ “Town Tidying” (1916) and “Architecture and Modern Life” (1917), both as repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 21 and 109 respectively.

³⁴ “Architecture and Modern Life” (1917), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 109.

³⁵ “Education of the Architect,” originally given at the Informal Conference at the R.I.B.A., May 2, 1917., as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 131.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 131-132.

³⁷ As found in Form in Civilization (1922), p. 108, originally 1917.

labeled disgraceful. The one at the junction of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street he said, was “simply infamous.”³⁸

Lethaby’s Criticisms Continued—(1920-1931)

In a talk Lethaby gave in 1921 at the London Central School he challenged the indifference of the populace to bad urban conditions. As paraphrased in The Builder, Lethaby said that people “did not seem to ask themselves why they had gloomy dreary towns, and wretched shanties called railway stations, and slummy streets, and not very water-tight houses in which to live.”³⁹ In the talk, also Lethaby had spoken of the ignorance people had (and should not have had) about their towns. He complained, as paraphrased in The Builder, “people did not know anything about the towns they lived in.”⁴⁰ In general, he said, “town patriotism” and “commercial spirit” were not being sufficiently fostered.⁴¹

In 1923 one finds two strong indictments by Lethaby of the present environment—one about refuse, the other (again) about transportation devices:

All about the once sweet commons or tidy roads are ‘dumps’ of tins, old pots and pans, broken glass and other repulsive horrors. What seems to be an inevitable destructing of England’s surface by the over-extending towns, factories and shunting-grounds of railways, is disquieting enough; to this we must add the fields which grow advertisements and the unnecessary chicken-run and shanty-kind of farming. Now, beyond all this is the growing habit of looking on the land as a mere background for rubbish deposits. Nothing is so urgently required in all our villages as a well considered method of dealing with this refuse nuisance in order to tidy up the present disorder.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid., p. 109. A like-minded contemporary of Lethaby, Lawrence Weaver, had written in 1905 in concurrence, on the state of English towns. Also, Chapter II of The New Machiavelli (by H.G. Wells), Weaver wrote in 1919, gave “the most convincing picture of the sprawling disorder and ugliness of Victorian building that has yet been written.” (Small Country Houses of Today, Vol. II., p. 148.) Earlier, in Volume I (1905) he said, in regard to Birmingham, that “her most devoted lover could not say much by way of praise of the city itself.” (p. 79.)

³⁹ Op. cit., March 25, 1921, p. 379.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 379.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Orig. “Home and Country Arts” (1923), as found in Home and Country, 1924 ed., page n.a. Originally appeared in Home and Country magazine, 1923.

In his series “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” from the same year in The Builder, in discussing what architecture was and commenting upon how it may or may not be akin to such things as automobiles, Lethaby included this about the state of contemporary urban life “Architecture may be more than that, different from that, or less than, and our modern architecture is greatly less than that, as witness our towns, any of them, and our streets, all of them.”⁴³ Similarly, in the notes for a talk to the Women’s Institute the same year Lethaby observed:

We are always being told that something wonderful would happen if we travelled faster and had bigger iron bridges, and large slices of Africa, and more train cars and we are to prepare a water supply for a London of 12 million in 1931, but the signature of art across it all is Clapton Junction and Piccadilly Circus and Bernondsay and Bethnal Green; and the sooner we find out what is the meaning of this writing on these walls the better.⁴⁴

In Lethaby’s writings on Webb two years later, Lethaby offered, as he had in various forms a number of times before, the vision of a pristine pre-industrial town. In this case, he focused on Oxford which he said “was a work of natural human art form end to end. It had not been smirched over by the new commercial architecture and was practically unspotted by the world.”⁴⁵ In his 1925 account of Webb, Lethaby recounted a morose conversation he had had with him about modern urban life: “[We] talked of what life is becoming in big cities with the avenues of sensation closed to ideas of beauty. No sunny, green grass mounds and grey Gothic buildings, no sounds of bells and birds...”⁴⁶ A letter from Webb to Lethaby (date unavailable) provides a sample of Webb’s own way of describing an urban situation which he had found disturbing. One can see the similarity of Lethaby’s point of view to that of his mentor:

Poor ancient Winchester is in bad case, inhabited by barbarians of the deepest dye, and surrounded by suburbs coloured with coal-tar tints, which flout the sober greys and browns of antiquity—drawing a reasonable visitor to distraction. Even London—“The Dirtiest of the

⁴³ “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” Part XI: “Direction and Development,” 2 Nov., 1923, The Builder, p. 691.

⁴⁴ MS and TS (1923), p. 3, at Barnstaple; title not available.

⁴⁵ Philip Webb (1935), p. 8 (orig. in The Builder, 1925).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Dirty”—which was just touched on when [I was] passing from one station to another under rain, was not so disheartening; for it has been passing through the commercial mill for so long, that small are the items of interest which yet remain for consolation.⁴⁷

As he had in 1921, in his essay “About Beauty” (original date not determined, but reprinted in 1928), Lethaby tried to awaken people to what urban life might be, in order to throw off their placid acceptance of the ugly: “No one, however, takes any notice of the wretched railway stations, the advertisement plastered houses, and untidy streets on the way to the sports grounds. We don’t see them, don’t know that they might be beautiful, too, in a right human way as a matter of course; we are not generally and alertly interested.”⁴⁸

Lethaby’s Criticisms—Additional Undated Sources

Some other commentary by Lethaby on the state of English cities is worth noting. In The Times, in his article “Art in Common Life” (1921) Lethaby wrote about what he saw as the low quality of things generally in London: “London has some magnificent assets—the noble river, St. Paul’s, Waterloo Bridge, Westminster Abbey, The Tower and the parks, but the average things filling in between are not good enough, and the standard of ordinariness is low.”⁴⁹ The fact that his vehicle for publication this time was The Times must have prompted him to mention the newspaper in making his next point:

It would be a good thing if The Times could interview places as well as persons. What do Ludgate Circus and Piccadilly Circus say—and Oxford Street and Holburn, Trafalgar Square, and the dreadful junction of Tottenham Court Road with Oxford Street? Roads and streets once intended to be fine, like the broad avenue of Euston Road, have been allowed to run down far below the level of civic order.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Courtesy of John Brandon-Jones (date of letter not ascertained, but before 1915).

⁴⁸ About Beauty, five-page reprint from Architecture (1928) by the City of Birmingham Central School of Arts and Crafts, p. 4.

⁴⁹ “Art in Common Life—Loving Our Cities—Professor Lethaby on True Civilization,” 23, iii, p. 11. (Interview.)

⁵⁰ Ibid.

But, he said: “Manchester and other large towns are even more heartbreaking than London. The supply of a few single works of art, however good, could have hardly any effect on such vast areas.”⁵¹ In another article, “The New Age” (1910), can be again found again criticism of London—its public buildings, train stations and refuse:

Apart from their quality the dearth of our public buildings is amazing. Is there a good lecture-hall in London?...look at the poverty and disorder of most of our railway stations, and the litter of paper in our streets; it is not only a question of ‘artists,’ but of tidiness, smartness, discipline, efficiency, civilization.⁵²

In another piece, “Local Patriotism and Art Production” (date not determined), can again be found Lethaby’s laying of many urban aesthetic problems on the doorstep of the railroads. As paraphrased in printed coverage of this talk:

Further, the time must come when towns would insist that public or semi-public services, like the railways, should put in order their banks, boundaries, and bridges, and, more than all, their stations, which, at the present time were [are] looked upon too much as colossal advertisement sheds, dirty, shabby and irritating.⁵³

In the same place Lethaby noted that increased centralization in the case of London (and resultant increase in size there) had thwarted previously healthy competitiveness with other English cities in trying to improve urban quality, to the detriment of all: “By the great centralization which had taken place in London not only had county capitals and the big towns ceased to compete with her, but London herself, no longer conscious of the rivalry of Edinburgh, Dublin, York and Bristol, had fallen into gross slackness and slatternness.”⁵⁴ In his essay “Town Redemption” (early 1917?), Lethaby criticized the tendency to

⁵¹ Ibid..

⁵² August 11, 1910, with a discussion by Lethaby about improvement for London. (Name of periodical and page n.a.; Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.)

⁵³ “Patriotism and Art Production—The Value of City Rivalries,” newspaper summary of Lethaby’s talk the day before at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, (newspaper name, date, and page n.a.; 1 column; clipping with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

think that “art” was something one had to seek elsewhere than in one’s own community: “Art in every form had [has] become a thing to run to the ends of the earth to see, not a thing to produce and stay at home. Even to get a pleasant meal in a restaurant we thought we had to go to Switzerland. Our towns have to be made places to spend our holidays in.”⁵⁵

Prescriptions—Prefatory Remarks

Looking back at the preceding comments by Lethaby, it can be acknowledged that he consistently complained about the present state of the urban environment, laying the blame on indifference, on unbridled and unpoliced growth in industry, commerce and transportation, and on the political system. He did offer a number of ideas however, about how things could be improved.

Dissemination

Lethaby’s comments on “the city” and the environment can be found, everywhere in Lethaby’s writing. However, before passing on to a discussion of Lethaby’s prescriptions for urban and environmental improvement, it seems worthwhile to mention some of his writing efforts specifically addressing environmental, urban or community subjects. Interest in the City of London singularly drew Lethaby’s attention, and several of his specific studies focus on this subject. These include: London before the Conquest (1902), Londinium and Pre-Roman London (1923), and Londinium Architecture and the Crafts (1923), the latter first appearing serially in The Builder in 1921. A collection of Lethaby’s articles, Form in Civilization (1922), contains two works specifically addressing urbanism: “Town Tidying,” (originally an address for the Arts and Crafts Society, 1916), and “Towns to Live In,” (originally appearing in the Hibbert Journal in 1918).⁵⁶ Lethaby contributed to the anthologies Art and Life (1897) and Town Theory and Practice (1921, Purdom ed.)—respectively, “Of Beautiful Cities”

⁵⁵ Op.cit., not paginated.

⁵⁶ Julius Posener, in Anfänge des Funktionalismus (1964), also has discussed these two articles and, in drawing from another piece published in Form in Civilization (“Modern German Architecture and What We may Learn from It,” 1915) called attention to some other thoughts of Lethaby on English urban problems—that is, about dirt and disorder in cities and villages, etc. and noted Lethaby’s favorable appraisal of German cities.

(originally a lecture given in 1896) and “The Town Itself” (subtitled “The Garden City is a Town”).⁵⁷

Lethaby’s series “Art and the Community”, which appeared in The Builder in 1930, is also worth noting in the context of this chapter’s discussion, as are parts of other series like the sub-articles—“Ordinary Town Frontage” and “Minor City Improvements: On Architectural Amelioration” in the series in The Builder, “A National Architecture” (1919).⁵⁸

A few particular associations stemming from writing efforts and collaborative design enterprises in the planning area could be mentioned. Lethaby no doubt knew Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, both of Garden City renown, from the Art Workers Guild and encountered them professionally in the competition Lethaby entered (with Halsey Ricardo) for the design of the first garden city, Letchworth. Lethaby also must have known from common Guild involvement another architect of great achievement in planning, Edwin Lutyens.

Inspiration from the Past

On occasion, Lethaby suggested that one should look to the past for examples to emulate in improving cities. Sometimes his comments were of a general nature as in his comment from “Ancient City Worship and Architecture” that “Archaeology shows us that towns have not always been like ours

⁵⁷ Chapter 3 of this last mentioned work was written by Lethaby’s friend, the Garden City planner Raymond Unwin.

⁵⁸ Other related works include Antique London (1924), Town Redemption (MS, Barnstaple, n.d.), “Ancient City Worship and Architecture,” (Barnstaple, n.d.), “Art in Common Life—Loving Our Own Cities,” The Times (date not available), and “Towns in Civilization,” a talk given at Leicester and summarized in the Daily Mercury (date not available). Friends and colleagues of Lethaby sometimes wrote on planning topics. Such was the case with Halsey Ricardo, Edwin Lutyens, Beresford Pite, Ernest Newton, Mervyn Macartney, and C.F.A. Voysey. Lethaby’s colleague Ricardo wrote at least one other piece (besides his “Of Colour in the Architecture of Cities,” 1896), in Art and Life... (1897), op.cit., oriented toward issues of urbanism. This was “The Amenities of Our Streets” (date not available), repr., like Lethaby’s “Towns to Live In,” by the Civic Arts Association. Lethaby’s friend Beresford Pite also wrote an essay reprinted by the Civic Arts Association—“A Sketch of Town Planning” (date not available). Ernest Newton, whom Lethaby replaced in Shaw’s office, wrote an article entitled “The Garden City” in 1902, and another friend, Mervyn Macartney wrote one called “The First Garden City” in 1905. From another colleague from the Art Workers Guild, C.F.A. Voysey, we have “On Town Planning” (published in the Architecture Review, 1919). It might also be mentioned that a prominent American architect, known for his planning activities as well, had done work in London in Lethaby’s day—Daniel Burnham, who acted as consulting architect to Selfridge’s Department Store, London (built mainly in the second and third decades of the twentieth century). It has not been possible to learn if Lethaby met Burnham.

but that they have in very fact been fair and enobling.”⁵⁹ Something Lethaby called “city worship,” comparable to the collective spirit of an army had existed, he said, in the past and this should be rekindled for society’s benefit. Paraphrased in The Daily Mercury, Lethaby’s thoughts were:

There was something, a spirit, in a city which made for organization and growth and led to city worship. There was a need of something of the sort at the present time so as to revitalize the energies of the citizens. The spirit had always been recognized in the army, but it had largely lapsed out of the city, or town, life. It was recognized that the army was a spiritual entity, and he would like to see that brought back to the organized life of the cities.⁶⁰

In 1921, in Lethaby’s address “Our Hope for the Future,” he again expressed the idea of “city worship” (here called “town love”). It was found in ancient Athens and in later cities, he wrote. As paraphrased in The Builder that year:

There was, for instance, the influence of town love, which was one of the great springs of motive of all ancient life. They had a deep, tremendous, sacred love for Athens. It was the same in the Middle Ages with Florence and Venice; a deep motive power of love in all the citizens; the sense that the city was an entity and an ideal. It gave the citizens the substance of life. It was a thing he hoped they would try one day to get back in England.⁶¹

Ancient Greece, and especially Athens figure the most prominently amongst Lethaby’s models of cities from the past. In 1896, he described ancient Athens in appreciative terms, as part of a historical frame in which to see modern London:

Everywhere we find the dual city inhabited by gods and men. Everywhere it was conceived as a large home for the citizens, a great open-air museum and picture gallery, shadowed by groves and surrounded by gardens. Everywhere the city was the scene of a dignified common life where frequent processions wound along sacred ways and brought first-fruits to the temples.⁶²

⁵⁹ MS, Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple; part of a lecture. Page and date n.a.

⁶⁰ Summary of Lethaby’s talk “Towns in Civilization” given in Leicester at the Literary and Philosophical Society, news clipping from the Daily Mercury, date and page n.a.

⁶¹ “Professor Lethaby on ‘Our Hope for the Future,’ March 25, 1921, The Builder, (p. 879). See also, from the MS/TS “Ancient City Worship and Architecture”; “it is just this city worship which we have to try to understand if we would bring order and some beauty into the circumstances of modern life.” (op.cit., date and page n.a.).

⁶² “Of Beautiful Cities,” as printed in Art and Life... (1897), op.cit., p. 63.

In Architecture (1911) Lethaby relied on Plutarch in citing some laudable activity in ancient Athens. “Pericles,” Lethaby noted, “entered on rebuilding Athens as the best means of wisely distributing wealth among the people...”⁶³ In Architecture also, Lethaby again suggested that ancient Greek cities were praiseworthy, this time drawing from the writings of Christopher Wren, who had suggested that architecture was politically useful:

Architecture has its political use; public building being the ornament of a country, it establishes a nation; draws people and commerce; makes the people love their native country, which passion is the great original of all great actions of the commonwealth. The emulations of the Greek cities was the true cause of their greatness.⁶⁴

Also, in “Ancient City Worship and Architecture,” Lethaby said that the position of the ancient Greeks, among builders of cities, was pre-eminent and that familiarity with ancient Greek culture remained important: “The Greek was the supreme city builder of the world and that is the chief reason why Hellenic Studies are so valuable, indeed so necessary to city dwellers?”⁶⁵

As to the subject of artistic rivalries as they might be related to urban improvement, Lethaby also found inspiration in the past. Cities throughout time, Lethaby thought, had benefitted from such rivalries, as indicated in this following paraphrasing in a newspaper of his lecture “Patriotism and Art Production”:

Indicating the value of city emulation in the past he [Lethaby] described the results of the artistic rivalries of the Greeks as seen in the architecture of the Hellenistic cities. Having described the architectural splendours of Ancient Rome and of Byzantium, Mr. Lethaby went on to speak of art producing rivalries of the City States which rose in Italy after the decline of Rome. Venice, Pisa, Siena, Orvieto, Perugia, Bologna, Verona, and many another city were conspicuous in an emulation which produced the noblest buildings. In France the cities during the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries engaged in like artistic competitions, and all its hundred cathedrals were rebuilt. In England it was much the same at Canterbury, London, York, Durham, Lincoln, and Salisbury. On either hand of Birmingham [where

⁶³ Op. cit., p. 190 (Specific passage in Plutarch’s writings not given).

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 190.

⁶⁵ Op. cit. (n.d., page n.a.). “City worship” is brought up later in this, and Lethaby stressed its relevancy for his own time: “...the Greek city, the supreme manifestation of the Hellenic genius has not been sufficiently studied in England...” (op.cit., page n.a.).

Lethaby gave the lecture], at Lichfield and Coventry, there were interesting testimonies to cathedral building competition.⁶⁶

In this same address at Birmingham, Lethaby had suggested with some levity that one could take inspiration from the great cities of the past and bring contemporary English cities to that level. Again from the newspaper report paraphrasing his talk:

Noble works had been wrought, noble thoughts had been stirred in the name of and by the memory of the cities of the past—Jerusalem, Athens, Florence—and he [Lethaby] could not see that we should be content until we might suppose that the names of Leeds, Bradford, Wolverhampton, and other modern centres of population were equally potent subjects for high poetical feeling. (Laughter and applause).⁶⁷

Lethaby provided an idealized characterization of cities in the past in a lecture he gave at Leicester. Of that talk, “Towns and Civilization,” The Daily Mercury (date not available) reported: “The Lecturer...dwelt upon the beauties of the ancient cities of Troy, Athens, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople, Pompeii, Venice, etc., and said that in those days ugliness had not been invented; people had had to rise to a very much higher state of civilization before ugliness was invented. (Laughter).⁶⁸

Although Athens was the ancient city Lethaby most frequently lauded for its urban constructs, Rome was mentioned on occasion, as well. A reference to Rome made in 1917, for example, seems to compliment the city for something other than isolated building achievements: “[T]he lesson for us is that Rome had a spirit which was not only expressed in worthy units of building, but in splendid organic groups.”⁶⁹ In 1896, Lethaby looked at London itself at various points in her history. He quoted the twelfth

⁶⁶ Op.cit., page n.a.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Op.cit., (n.d.).

⁶⁹ “The Spirit of Rome and Our Modern Problem in Architecture,” Architectural Review, Jan., 1917, p. 2. Lethaby had referred to Rome earlier (1896) using it to show of how it was necessary to start from scratch to improve London. (“Of Beautiful Cities,” Art and Life..., p. 110). Blomfield’s companion essay from 1896 in the 1897 volume containing Lethaby’s 1896 lecture shows, as does Lethaby’s writing just quoted, an appreciation of ancient Rome’s ability to effectively group buildings: “[The Roman grouped his buildings]...in such relation to each other, as that their effect was enhanced instead of being stultified,” (Of Public Spaces...,” p. 177).

century historian Fitz-Stephen on London life in that time, his intent seemingly to evoke positive thoughts about the period—to make one think perhaps that, far from the usual view, things might even have been better than in the present:

The dwellers in the city were noteworthy...for handsomeness of dress and manner. It is happy in the healthiness of its air, in the Christian religion, in the strength of its defenses, the nature of its site, the honour of its citizens, the modesty of its matrons—it is pleasant in sports and fruitful of noble men. Such was the idea of the ‘Dark Ages’!⁷⁰

Similarly, in the London of Chaucer’s time, Lethaby said, everything was snowy white, “houses, churches and even St. Paul’s itself, all [were] whitewashed, and with illumination here and there with pictures of St. Christopher, a Majesty, a Virgin, or some heraldry with knotwork.”⁷¹ In Wren’s time, after the rebuilding, not quite such a rosy picture of the city was offered:

As rebuilt by Wren, it was fine enough, but all romance had gone; scholarship had superceded living art. Instead of beauty that all understood and enjoyed, a pretentious and unrealizable grandeur was aimed at...

This time is best represented by the suburban houses and gardens, pleasant enough plans for those who could afford such islands of comfort round a sea of Hogarthian misery.⁷²

As for comments on the time before Wren’s, one can note Lethaby’s appreciation of Inigo Jones’ contribution to urban London, by reading his notes on Jones in a sketchbook from 1908: “To him we owe the laying out of two London places—two piazzas at Covent Garden and Lincoln Inn Fields—the parents of all London Squares.”⁷³

⁷⁰ “Of Beautiful Cities,” *Op.cit.*, p. 89.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁷³ Lethaby’s sketchbook dated April 11, 1908.

Inspiration from Contemporary Developments Abroad

Lethaby frequently pointed to contemporary developments in other countries to inspire his countrymen to improve cities in England. In almost every instance, the examples were drawn either from Europe (especially Germany) or from countries which had been at one time under English control.

In 1911, Lethaby compared English cities with those of Europe—calling attention to the greater quality of European cities.⁷⁴ German cities had a particular attraction for Lethaby. A year earlier he had complimented the “tidiness” of Munich and said, more generally, that the “dignity of German cities must be acknowledged and praised,” citing particularly buildings in Germany related to railway operations.⁷⁵ In 1913, on the eve of WWI, Lethaby continued to praise Germany. He saw Europe and America in competition then for the leadership of the civilized world and went on, more specifically, to cite Germany’s urban accomplishments as a manifestation of this:

I see that all Europe and America are racing for the lead in civilisation. Along with the commercial strife there is a culture war going forward. This idea has perhaps only been consciously worked out in Germany, but it is obvious that there a consistent endeavor has been made during the last thirty or forty years to attain to a coherent type of modern city life. Picture galleries and museums have been strenuously built up, no opportunity has been let slip of acquiring exciting works of art. All has been done with forethought and system. Tram organisation has been perfected to a marvellous [sic] point. City gardening has been developed in a wonderful way; every city seems to have a large piece of pure country suburb where it goes out to picnic. Everywhere there is city pride and corporate life.⁷⁶

In the same article Lethaby remarked on the astonishing “orderliness” and “splendour” of Munich, Berlin and Hanover.⁷⁷

A little later, during the First World War, Lethaby, with some temerity considering the present state of Anglo-German relations, delivered his lecture “Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn

⁷⁴ *Architecture* (1955 ed.), p. 21.

⁷⁵ “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910), as repr. in *Form in...* (1922). Comment on Munich from p. 91, the rest from p. 99.

⁷⁶ “Some Things to Be Done,” *The Builder*, Feb. 14, 1913, p. 206 (paper originally read by Lethaby at an Architectural Association meeting).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

From It" (1915). Included were these compliments about German cities: "The most striking general characteristics of Germany to my mind are those of great size, and the number of cities which are obviously architectural and centres of learning, and of the dignity of public services..."⁷⁸ Lethaby also noted "the wonderful efficiency and ambition of Germans in city organization."⁷⁹ Later in the War Years, in 1917, Lethaby pointed out how Germany, in the preceding thirty or forty years, had tried to attain a "coherent" type of modern city life based on, he said, the following: a) forethought and system; b) city pride; and c) the inclusion of large pieces of green real estate within the city, for public use.⁸⁰

Unfavorable references to European cities are difficult to locate in Lethaby's writing. One exists at least, an early one from 1896, in which Lethaby referred; as noted in Chapter VIII, to the "mechanical grandeur" of Vienna.⁸¹

Lethaby's admiration for foreign cities, other than European ones, is also a matter of record. For example in his talk "Art in Common Life," on the subject of "city-love" or "city-worship," he mentioned a number of cities connected in some way with England. As reported in a published account of Lethaby's talk:

I asked Professor Lethaby if he thought other countries were ahead of us...in town love. He replied with a commendation of the Dominions, particularly Canada and South Africa. Toronto and Montreal possessed inhabitants who took pride in them and cared for them. He had heard Pretoria highly praised on the same grounds. The Americans had this "city enthusiasm" too. But here, at the heart of the British Empire—he broke off with "Well, think of the foreigner who comes to London and the impression he carries away of our organization in this matter!"⁸²

⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, Jan., 1915, as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 99.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105. One can note a like enthusiasm on the part of Lethaby's friend Peach, who wrote to him in March, 1915: "One feels very much how dull our towns are when one comes back from places like Dusseldorf." (Letter in R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection).

⁸⁰ "Architecture and Modern Life," 1917, as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 106. In a letter to Peach, who was then in Germany (undated, but possibly circa 1922) Lethaby wrote: "We shall want to hear of Germany and tell of tidying towns when you come back." (R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection).

⁸¹ "Of Beautiful Cities," *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁸² *Op. cit.*, (Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple; author, name of publication, date, page, all not available).

In the manuscript “Town Redemption,” which may be related to the address just cited, India, Palestine and Mesopotamia were added to places already mentioned because of favorable civic activity. Lethaby commented about these places:

We have to keep up with what is being done in Europe and America and in our colonies. Toronto is I believe a dignified town entered at a smart and clean railway station. Pretoria I am told has real distinction and beauty. In far off India a great effort towards city order is being made at New Delhi, and we are busy cleaning up the places now occupied in Palestine and Mesopotamia.⁸³

On the last page in this same manuscript Lethaby wrote, quoting another source:

In a recent work describing Baghdad, I find it written that “The British with sanitary science and other new-fangled inventions have sought to scrape and clean and straighten out its tortuous evil-smelling streets and to let in light and wholesome air into the gloom and dampness while festering slum areas have been laid low by British pick axes.”⁸⁴

Also in “Town Redemption,” Lethaby promoted the idea of advisory councils, suggesting that one could look to America for evidence of success in this area:

Every town should have a semi-official advisory council for the human side of development. Such councils have proved very effective in America I believe. Architects and painters it seems to me should gather together and try to do some such collective work. They are thus proper watchmen for this kind of thing. Then might not the city councils set up some recognized treasury for bequests as if they were expected from citizens...⁸⁵

⁸³ Op.cit., not paginated. One-time fellow Arts and Crafts architect Edwin Lutyens was first called to New Delhi in 1911 and his work on the new capital is generally dated 1912-1931.

⁸⁴ Ibid., not paginated. Margaretta Darnall, in her doctoral dissertation “From the Chicago Fair to Walter Gropius: Changing Ideals in American Architecture: (Cornell University, 1975), has pointed out that Town Planning Review, published in England, in its early years, carried in each issue several articles on American planning practice and on the City Beautiful Movement. These appeared in 1910-1911 (p. 61). These could have been likely sources for Lethaby’s knowledge about American planning activity.

⁸⁵ Ibid., not paginated.

Advice for Improving Towns—to World War I

Until WWI, Lethaby's general prescriptions for improving English towns (a few specific ones will be addressed later) come mainly, at least among datable material, from his essay "Of Beautiful Cities" from 1896 and his book Architecture from 1911. In the 1896 essay the advice was directed specifically at London but seems to be a reflection of Lethaby's thinking generally. In the essay, the need for order within a city was stressed and so was the need for some kind of overall unity. For London, this should be accomplished, however, without recourse to what Lethaby saw as the unacceptably radical approach of Haussmann:

It were [would be?] easy to take a map of London, and marking on it a few important buildings, strike evenness across it a la Haussmann—easy and vain. Repudiating, as I do, all idea of grandifying London at a coup, or to any great extent formalizing it, I am certain that, before it can be thought of as a whole—a city—there must be some sort of more or less actual, or sentimental, order and unity given to it. Merely a central red dot on a map, with a circle of so many miles radius having some more dignified association than cab fares would be a comfort to one.⁸⁶

An improvement in the quality of urban objects (e.g. lampposts) was also stressed. To this end, Lethaby counseled that England should begin improving their towns at the "humblest plane"—stating with general cleaning and making sure that "street-furniture" (railings, lampposts, etc.) were of good

⁸⁶ Op. cit., as publ. in Art and Life... (1897), p. 104. The idea of need for order and focus was brought up in the same volume by Reginald Blomfield:

Determine on [which of] the buildings are of absorbing interest and public importance...lay out all future streets and public spaces as to make these buildings the principal features, and to bring them into relation with each other. By this means...one building would help another; and instead of the series of abrupt shocks to our senses...some continuous impression would be possible of a great and beautiful city. ("Of Public Spaces, Parks, and Gardens," pp. 193-194). Blomfield's idea calls to mind Sixtus V's plan for Rome.

Halsey Ricardo, in the 1897 volume as well identified the related quality "harmony" as one of several he regarded as important for the success of a city:

We are gradually tending towards a broad conception of civic life, civic duties, civic responsibilities, and civic pleasures, sinking our own idiosyncrasies for the sake of the public good, and enduring a great deal of restriction on our liberty for the furtherance of the commonwealth; and it is these qualities of endurance, renunciation and harmony on which we count to give the keynote and charm of the city. ("Of Colour in the Architecture of Cities," p. 214).

quality. Such “furniture” should be done by the best artists attainable.⁸⁷ The quality of larger objects in the urban environment also should be improved, Lethaby wrote in 1896—singling out his favorite *bête noir*, the railroad stations. The ones ringing central London, he said, were “places of indescribable shabbiness and squalor.” They were, after all, London’s gates to the outer world and deserved better treatment.⁸⁸ In 1896 it was also advised, in “Of Beautiful Cities,” that natural features be taken be taken advantage of (one in London being, for example, the river). Lethaby pointed out that the Thames was London’s dominant natural feature, and called its path from Westminster to London Bridge “the magnificent curve.”⁸⁹ The roadway along the north side of the river, the Thames embankment, was an appropriate man-made response to this beauty, he said, but a similar development on the south side (from Westminster to Blackfriar’s Bridge was also called for. Doing so, he said, “a ring of river-front exercise ground would be opened up hardly to be matched in any city in Europe.”⁹⁰ The arc of the river might also be recognized by the cutting of a new street, Lethaby suggested, (although he did not seem to acknowledge the probable destruction of existing urban fabric which would be necessary to cut such a street): “Possibly a fine street, across the chord of the river’s course, linking two bridge ends, might ultimately become the direct line of passage from east to west.”⁹¹ London and presumably other places would benefit by the insertion of more spaces, green and otherwise, within the existing fabric, Lethaby

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 104. Walter Crane, in the same volume, picked up a similar theme regarding the role of the artist in town improvement. He cited young painters in France who had been encouraged in their work by being awarded commissions to paint for the public buildings in their native towns, and reported that in Birmingham there was already a similar situation, with students of the Municipal Art School there working on local municipal buildings. (“Of the Decoration of Public Buildings,” as found in Art and Life..., 1897, p. 148.)

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 105.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 109.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 108-109. Blomfield, in 1896 as well, seems to have been interested in new streets for London, but to contrast with Lethaby, there is more emphasis in the picturesque possibilities (of any new streets). Taking Wren as precedent, Blomfield wrote, streets were to provide vistas:

Now, Wren at any rate, in his plan for the laying out of London, had two main objects in view: (1) to make the most of his buildings architecturally, and to provide fine vistas leading up to definite objects; (2) to provide the most direct and ample thoroughfares possible to the chief places of public resort; these would probably be admitted to be the main ideals to be aimed at in the laying out of cities. (“Of Public Spaces...,” as found in Art and Life... (1897), pp. 190-191.)

said in the same writing. Lethaby's idea about using green spaces to divide off London from "non-London" is interesting because of later experiments with "green belts." He wrote that he was repeating (unattributed) a suggestion that a "reservation" embracing Richmond Park, Putney, Wimbledon, (and other areas) be created. Most of it could be garden ground but he wanted to see there also "...a quiet street of tombs, where the distinguished dead might live..."⁹²

In 1911, in Architecture, Lethaby again urged that the overall quality in urban life be improved:

If the municipalities would spend less on 'art,' and more on requiring fine quality in all ordinary forms of workmanship, the situation would soon be improved. Cleaner streets and tidier railway stations would be better than all the knowledge of all the styles. An endeavour to better the city by introducing civic patriotism would be sure in due time to bring a fit method of expression.⁹³

Public interest, "demand" really, was cited as a prerequisite before improvement in the built environment could come about.⁹⁴

Connected to this appears Lethaby's remark about "city-love" in 1911, as a requisite for urban improvement. This ingredient, for which he had lauded past civilizations, was necessary for a successful modern city. But architectural furniture itself (and enlightened town planning) was not enough, Lethaby wrote, without civic enthusiasm for "corporate life":

If ever we are to have a time of architecture again, it must be founded on a love for the city, a worship of home and nation. No planting down of a few costly buildings, ruling some straight

⁹² Ibid., pp. 109-110. Blomfield maintained also in 1896 that individual architecture (at least at that time) was beyond civic control but that streets could be redeemed from their "prevailing insignificance." He said that "views" (or "vistas") along streets would improve them and that the approaches to London's large railway stations could be improved by the provision of open spaces in front or would at least give surroundings a kind of "grim dignity," (p. 193). Blomfield more generally, in a passage from this essay from 1896 which would have certainly enjoyed Lethaby's concurrence, wrote that "the design of streets and public spaces is one branch in the family of art [was] not to be treated as a side line...but rather as the last touch of civic architecture," (p. 174). Paralleling somewhat Lethaby's call for green reserves, Blomfield observed: "Our problem is how to open up our cities, how to get light and air and breathing space..." (p. 183). He also singled out, as did Lethaby, Waterloo Place, Westminster Abbey, and the British Museum as nodal points in central London, and like Lethaby (whose specific proposal will be discussed later), identified a need for an open space in front of the latter—a conclusion to the great thoroughfare from the Strand to Oxford Street that "has got to be made," (p. 194).

⁹³ Op.cit., as found in 1955 edition, p. 190.

⁹⁴ Architecture (1911), as in 1955 ed., p. 189.

streets, provision of fountains, or setting up of a number of stone and bronze dolls is enough without the enthusiasm for corporate life and common ceremonial. Every noble city has been a crystallization of the contentment, pride and order of the community. A period of architecture is the time of a flowing tide.⁹⁵

Lethaby also emphasized the role of the architect and of city government in building successful cities.

There was, he said, a close relationship between architecture and the success of the wider man-made form, the city.⁹⁶ Lethaby had also stressed in his 1896 essay the importance of the participation of the inhabitants in making successful cities. To do this, he said, “we must teach a tradition of citizenship in our schools...”⁹⁷

Advice for Improving Towns—The Years of WWI

During the years of World War I, a number of the same ideas expressed earlier as to how to improve urban life, appear in Lethaby’s writings, although there are some new variations on these. Again there are general comments about cleaning up, about control and order, about the importance of public art, and about the roles of the citizen and of the architect in improving the urban environment. There seems, in addition, to be more suggestions about urban improvement brought about through the action of instituted bodies such as universities, the R.I.B.A. publications, and the government. This latter development will be demonstrated a bit further on.

To begin a more specific discussion of Lethaby’s war-era commentary on planning and improving the environment, one might start with Lethaby’s comments of 1917, offered in “Architecture and Modern Life.” Lethaby praised in this address the “town-planning movement” of the time and offered his own general, rather eclectic, list of requirements to be satisfied in the quest for improving English towns. Things to aim for were:

1. Improved public buildings

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 190.

⁹⁶ Architecture (1911), 1955 ed., p. 22.

⁹⁷ “Of Beautiful Cities,” as publ. in 1897 in Art and Life..., p. 101.

2. Well-ordered streets
3. A burgeoning of outdoor cafes
4. Preserved places of “clean country” near every town
5. The instillation of “Town Worship” and a “sense of community” and a “rational spirit” in the citizenry.⁹⁸

Towns, he commented upon in the same year in “The Foundation in Labour,” were more important than individual works of high art and more key to aesthetic improvement: “When our towns have been made tidy and fit to live in, beauty will spring up of itself, and we shall not need any theory of art thrills, for beauty will be about us.”⁹⁹ A town is itself a work of art, Lethaby wrote the next year. But town beauty was not something to be worried over consciously, for it would follow if people were concerned with cleanliness, order, and appropriateness.¹⁰⁰

Besides order, Lethaby brought up the allied notion of control in these years. In 1915, it had to do with a need to control the visual environment through control of advertising.¹⁰¹ In 1918, similarly, it was control of railroad advertising that was needed (and control over the railroads themselves.)¹⁰²

In 1916, the idea of ringing the ideal urban area with ideal countryside appeared, as it had earlier in his comments from 1896. Lethaby wrote of “decent, unspoilt countryside” around the ideal town.¹⁰³ Similarly, in 1918 (“Towns to Live In”), Lethaby wrote that a wood, common, walk or view near each of

⁹⁸ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 112.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁰⁰“Towns to Live In” (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 23. Lethaby’s friend Lawrence Weaver, commenting on the needs of town planning in England immediately after WWI stressed also the need for order: “The need is for order and more order, and for a steady purpose to prevent the new England from becoming a waste of unrelated buildings.” Weaver quoted H.G. Wells from The New Machiavelli: “I have always felt that order rebels against and struggles against disorder, that order has an uphill job in experiments, gardens, suburbs, everything alike.” The first aim of town planners, Weaver added, should be to secure a spacious and hygienic setting for a picturesque house which would be characterized by “regulated disorder” rather than order itself. (Small Country Houses..., Vol. II., p. 148.

¹⁰¹“Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn From It” (1915), as repr. in Form in..., p. 104. In associated comments he called for improving London’s Underground stations and public services in English villages.

¹⁰²“Towns to Live In,” as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 25.

¹⁰³“Town Tidying,” Repr. in Form in... (1922), op.cit., pp. 19-20.

our towns must be preserved or redeemed.¹⁰⁴ Within the city, the idea of town parks must be changed, he said. There was too much gravel and railings.¹⁰⁵

Citizens were important to urban success, Lethaby wrote in 1916. There he stressed, as he had in earlier writings, drawing the non-professional into town improvement activities, including addressing the problems of advertisements, litter, and more generally, “dreariness” and “dullness.”¹⁰⁶ The next year he wrote that if one really looked at English towns one would see how bad they were and how a sense of citizenship, a sense of public order, and a national spirit were needed—by both the general public and also for architects.¹⁰⁷

Architects, as well as citizens in general had important responsibilities for the success of cities, Lethaby believed. Architects, he wrote in 1917, should think in bigger terms than they were usually accustomed. They should think in terms of cities and civilization, and not of “art houses.”¹⁰⁸ Lethaby, it should be stressed, was one of the first modern architectural writers to pay much attention to problems of the built environment overall, as opposed to those of the individual building, and he was one of the first to encourage other architects to do so. Some urban-oriented criteria he proposed for judging architecture included asking the questions: was it “city-like?,” “neighborly?,” “dignified?”¹⁰⁹ Lethaby observed: “I really think that looking at architecture as principally the Art of Building Cities might modify our

¹⁰⁴*Op. cit.*, as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶“Town Tidying,” as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 18.

¹⁰⁷“Architecture and Modern Life” (1917), as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 109. Lethaby wrote to his friend Peach about this time (Jan. 22, 1918), about how he would like to write a short introduction to someone’s history of a town, in which he would stress patriotism, as did Tom Stow in his book about London.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 110. Earlier in this there is a similar passage to the effect that architects must aim at order in cities—they should consider the big picture (p. 107).

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 113.

practice...if a sufficient body of people could be got to care I am sure it would. It might get into our teaching, into scholarship...and at last it might work out into the streets.”¹¹⁰

As to the role of organizations in urban improvement, one might cite first a portion of Lethaby's letter (1915) to his friend Sydney Cockerell who occupied a teaching post at Cambridge. The letter reveals Lethaby's notion that regular, established universities might offer courses to make people more aware of their environment:

More and more of the sink of slums which our towns are, oppresses me. Don't the universities see anything, and couldn't they set up an infant-class in civilization? You know—order, tidiness, brightness is everything; can't you tell Cambridge of the swinish horror of the railway station? Oxford in the approach and High Street has gone lower than we ever supposed it might be—so imbecile, blatant, shoddy.¹¹¹

Professional organizations were also a factor. In 1917, in commenting on the education of an architect and on what Lethaby thought the educational policy of the R.I.B.A. should be, he offered a list of items which related to his perspective—his concern for urban and environmental problems, not just narrower architectural ones:

- a) Civilization
- b) Town improvement
- c) National housing
- d) Quality in building
- e) Cottage types
- f) Preservation of historic buildings
- g) Better public memorials.¹¹²

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Oct. 9, 1915, as repr. in Friends of a Lifetime (1940), Viola Meynell, ed., p. 135.

¹¹²“Education of the Architect,” as repr. in Form in (1922), p. 126.

The same year in “Architecture and Modern Life,” Lethaby stated that he wanted the R.I.B.A. to formulate a policy on “public works” and to concentrate on questions of “architecture in civilization.” The R.I.B.A. “should become a centre of effort for better town life.”¹¹³ In “Education of the Architect” (1917) he wrote that no architecture could mean anything while English towns were in their present shape. Public work must first give a new tradition.¹¹⁴ Two years earlier, Lethaby called on the architectural press to advocate for public works, and, in 1917, also for the re-establishment of a Surveyor-General’s office in London to improve the quality of such undertakings.¹¹⁵

Comments on public art also figured into Lethaby’s advice on the urban improvement. It was a necessity not a luxury he said in 1916.¹¹⁶ But, for Lethaby, public art did not mean galleries or public statues, or even lampposts. To Lethaby it meant upgrading the quality of life.¹¹⁷ In “Towns to Live In” (1918), he wrote about how public memorials might help towns. They should not be “dull hero-presentment,” however, something more abstract like Alfred Steven’s works Valour and Courage, or maybe be a personification of the town itself.¹¹⁸ At the end of World War II, in “Memorials of the Fallen,” Lethaby discussed what he considered to be truly appropriate war memorials. These could take form, he suggested, of civic undertakings. Lethaby offered a number of courses of action for these, which were uniformly ambitious:

- 1) Town re-building and re-enlivening (with civic amenities—especially folk schools and stadiums).

¹¹³1917. As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 116.

¹¹⁴As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 131-132.

¹¹⁵“Modern German Architecture...” (1915) and “Architecture and Modern Life,” both as repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 103 and 102, respectively.

¹¹⁶“Town Tidying,” as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 19.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

¹¹⁸“Towns to Live In” (1918), as repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 31-32. About this time one can note Weaver’s similar enthusiasm for public art: “If democracy is going to prove itself capable of directing its energies to anything beyond material benefit, such as hygiene and technical education, a wide public art, visible in its town halls, its schools, and its every street, must be the expression of its aesthetic activities.” (Small Country Houses of Today, Vol. II, 1919, pp. 122-123.)

- 2) The establishment in England (or perhaps throughout the United Kingdom) of a dozen new universities—which would emphasize experiment, research, and the crafts.
- 3) National old-age hospitals to replace workhouse infirmaries.
- 4) Redemption of the countryside—cleaning it up and removing advertisements.
- 5) Making rail-roads efficient and orderly.
- 6) Constructing an Irish channel tunnel (with a railroad) to a new Atlantic port—“a British Appian Way.”
- 7) The setting up of a Ministry of Civilization which would, among other things, oversee public design from postage stamps on up and promote national culture.
- 8) Re-build most of London (!).
- 9) Make efforts at River Control.
- 10) Institute summer camps near big towns “where experience gained during the war might be maintained.” [this one is a little unclear]
- 11) Each county might experiment in building a new town. Each town might build a garden suburb. Each village might build a cottage to be let to someone who has suffered in the war.
- 12) Organized labour could found a...town for craft teaching and industrial research.¹¹⁹

Advice for Improvements—After WWI

Amongst Lethaby's writings after World War I, his essay “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920) is one of the more rewarding sources to learn his advisory comments on improving towns and the environment. There appear a number of the themes previously mentioned—public art, citizenship, order and control. On the last-mentioned, Lethaby counseled in 1920 that towns must be disciplined—meaning, in particular, that visible advertising must be controlled, and that railway stations (as ever) as well as houses and yards should be cleaned up. He urged the formation of advisory boards for each town to improve urban quality, and brought up again the ideas of “town-worship” and local patriotism. He urged the widest involvement in efforts to improve the built environment—efforts which would improve the

¹¹⁹1919, as repr. in Form in... (1922), pp 60-61. Points 11 and 12 are not listed by number in Lethaby's text but follow directly after the numbered listings.

control of litter and encourage the removal of advertisements and above-surface telephone and telegraph wires.¹²⁰ Lethaby also called for the finding of a popular basis for urban improvements and warned against leaving matters to professionals and against tacit acceptance of current solutions:

We need...[a?...]general cleaning, tidying, and smartening movement, to go with Housing and Town Planning as categories of effort, an effort to improve all our public and social arts, from music to cooking and games...The danger is to think of housing and planning as technical matters for experts. It may almost be feared that current talk of town planning with garden cities may have hardened into a jargon-like political formula.¹²¹

The idea of city rivalries to stimulate improvements was broached. Perhaps civilization should be seen as a contest, Lethaby said—an international Eisteddfod.¹²² Lethaby had emphasized again in “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920), as in earlier writings, that another form of citizenship—interest in the public arts was a necessity of civilization.¹²³ Buildings face the world, Lethaby wrote, and the spectator was part owner, in a sense, even of private ones. He claimed that the public needed protection from bad building which, unlike unwanted plays and books, could not be ignored. At present, he said people could only protect themselves by diminishing their faculty of awareness.¹²⁴ The same year, he commented again on the role of the Fine Arts in contributing to better communities. Painters, for example, he said, could assist by helping to adorn public building “in some civilizing way.”¹²⁵

Related to the issue of preservation, to be discussed in detail in the next chapter, Lethaby also wrote in 1920 that our civilized life also required that people have some sense of historical continuity.¹²⁶ The

¹²⁰Preceding material in this paragraph from the 1920 article, as repr. in Form in... (1922), pp.6 and 15.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, page n.a. Lethaby’s talk in Leicester, “Towns in Civilization” (date unknown), used almost the same phrasing.

¹²²*Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹²³As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 9.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

¹²⁵“Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy and the Higher Criticism of Art” (1920), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 181.

¹²⁶“Architecture as Form in Civilization,” as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 3.

next year, in his talk, “Our Hope for the Future,” he also stressed that it would be good for people to have knowledge of the history of their towns—that it would give them strength to carry on.¹²⁷ In “About Beauty,” Lethaby wrote similarly: “...a much deeper sense of neighbourhood and of local history is required. We really don’t half live until we know where we live, and the thought of past happenings will greatly intensify the moving power of landscape and old buildings.”¹²⁸

In 1921, Lethaby brought up in a lecture the suggestion, similar to one advanced in 1915, that the popular press should be involved in encouraging citizenship. As paraphrased in coverage of the lecture in The Builder, Lethaby said that: “[The newspapers told people] ...to think imperially and in continents, and why should there not be similar exhortations to think communally in cities? It would bring out pride...”¹²⁹ Citizenship and a common caring for the environment was also focused on in Lethaby’s About Beauty:

When the time comes, as it must, or things will get too bad, that we realize the need for beauty in our common life—not a few pictures here and there indoors, or collections of statues in museums—but evidence of caring for fitness and order everywhere—then this beauty will have to be grown again from the bottom.

We must begin again in humble ways and common things, in picking up strewn paper in the streets, in restraining and regularizing advertisements, in washing out railway stations, in purifying the air, in loyalty to our towns, in reverence to unsullied nature, in the things of everyday life, in fact, in everything everywhere.¹³⁰

Other Commentary on Improving Cities (Undated)

Lethaby’s essay “Town Redemption” holds some interesting comments on improving cities. A passage near the beginning acknowledges the pre-eminence of such ethereal requirements as possessing the “spirit of civilization”:

¹²⁷March 25, 1921, The Builder, “Professor Lethaby on ‘Our Hope for the Future,’ ” a report on a recent address by Lethaby, p. 879.

¹²⁸Excerpt from 1922 reprint, by the City of Birmingham Central School of Arts and Crafts of an article appearing in Architecture (original date not known).

¹²⁹“Professor Lethaby on ‘Our Hope for the Future,’ ” 25 March, 1921, p. 879.

¹³⁰Op.cit., p. 3.

All these things [town layouts, city centers with architecture and sculpture] will be good if they spring up from a spirit of growth. Don't much care for them if they are an added weight laid over the top of things as they are. If I might paraphrase great words I would say that my argument is: Seek first the spirit of civilization and all those other things will be added to you in proper proportions, and in delightful ways which cannot even be dreamed of.¹³¹

Also, in the same essay, on the subject of "spirit," Lethaby commented: "The redemption of our towns depends as all depends on the spirit of the people, if they can be brought to care, that care and love will blossom out in unknown ways."¹³² Lethaby wrote also in "Town Redemption" of the uniqueness of each city and of its relationship with its resident culture. Proper cognizance should be taken of the impact a city has on its culture Lethaby said:

Every city is not only a group of dwellings but... is a special form of organism subject to its own laws of progression and perfection. We should be taught to think of it as a school of culture; whether it is realized or not, it is in fact, producing a special form of culture all the time. A city is a bigger university, it has to be a school of manners, a school of production, a school of art, of science, of music, of athletics. In a word a school of civilization.¹³³

Pride and delight in one's native city was a goal Lethaby argued for in his talk in Leicester "Towns in Civilization." As summarized in the Daily Mercury (Leicester): "Cities were [are], after all, only large homes, and the people should take a pride in them and enter a healthy competition with each other. Cities like Edinburgh, York, and Exeter were a great asset to a nation. Pride and delight in their native city was one of the things they [we] could not afford to neglect."¹³⁴

In Lethaby's "Art in Common Life" as in his 1911 book Architecture, the beneficial effects of "town love" are extolled with almost religious fervor: "We have home love and love of country, but town love is being fostered hardly anywhere in England. We must try to bring back some sense of town

¹³¹"Town Redemption," op.cit., Barnstaple, n.d., no pagination.

¹³²*Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹³³*Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹³⁴No date, p. n.a.

sacredness and worship. It would do better to love our own cities than to be expensively instructed that the Athenians and Florentines revered theirs.”¹³⁵

In “Art in Common Life,” Lethaby spoke also of common effort at common improvements: “What is needed is a widespread common effort with an aim that everyone might understand. I should like the enterprise to have some such title as ‘Town Tidying’.”¹³⁶ What was first to be done amongst these common improvements, Lethaby then stated:

Why, obvious nuisances like the telegraph wires hitched up overhead, the strewn paper under foot, the smoke in the sky, must be dealt with. Our advertising customs could be improved to everybody’s content if the evil of disorder were only realized. This is a question not only of posters, but of the habit of smothering street frontages with huge and hideous lettering.¹³⁷

In Lethaby’s address “Patriotism and Art Production,” one can note variations in matters of priority:

It was [is] undesirable in our present state and lack of practice to attempt the great things of city adornment, to build magnificent and ornamented buildings, to cover them with frescoes and mosaics, and to lay out vistas of statues and foundations. Such things without a long traditional development must necessarily end in failure. We needed [need] rather to take up every little thread of amelioration—better street cleaning, more tree planting, whitewashing of grimy walls, more substantial and rational plain buildings, more careful planning of streets according to a large scheme; the opening up of spaces and the like.¹³⁸

In “Patriotism...,” Lethaby also said that rivalries between English cities would once again come into play, in the sense of their mutual betterment. Lethaby said, as paraphrased in The Builder, that he wished the time would come when “it should be rumoured in Nottingham or Leicester that Birmingham had carved out some circus or ‘place’ and surrounded it with fair buildings, and where should thus be aroused

¹³⁵Op.cit., page n.a.

¹³⁶Ibid., page n.a.

¹³⁷Ibid., page n.a.

¹³⁸Op.cit., page n.a.. Similar thoughts are expressed in “Town Redemption,” (MS, Barnstable): “It is the tidying of what exists already that interests me the most and this is likely to be neglected in visionary new schemes...it may be begun everywhere: at the railway station and the market and in front and back of every house. We need not worry ourselves about the great schemes indeed until many simpler questions of decency, order, cleanliness and fitness are on the way to being solved. The greater things may only be satisfactorily solved after practice on the smaller ones.” (not paginated).

in them also the passion for the ideal city.”¹³⁹ Lethaby continued: “If emulation at home was not sufficient to accomplish such an object, we must call on international rivalries and the greater patriotism.”¹⁴⁰

In “Town Redemption” and in a talk of Lethaby’s published in The New Age, two additional ideas for improvement are mentioned. In “Town Redemption,” there is a variation on an idea encountered in some of the datable material—that towns should have their own history, presumably an account to be easily accessible to the town’s inhabitants: “In every town a short book is required which in a vivid and friendly way will tell its [the town’s] story.”¹⁴¹ In The New Age, Lethaby suggested a less frequently advanced notion—that one could consider a beautiful city more viable, looked at even from the standpoint of economics, although he did not go on to develop this point: “[D]oes it not seem that a beautiful city may be the proper thing to aim at merely ‘economically’? If so, beauty, health, and joy would be thrown in as bonuses.”¹⁴²

Lethaby’s Specific Proposals and Involvement with Planning in Practice

In the preceding pages, a number of Lethaby’s suggestions for improving towns and the urban environment have been presented. The thrust of these suggestions is directed markedly towards improving the existing environment generally—more cleanliness and less clutter—rather than towards specific ideas for new streets, squares, neighborhoods or towns. Indeed, Lethaby often wrote that specific ideas and their implantation could only have meaning after the awareness of the citizenry itself, “town spirit” had

¹³⁹Ibid., page n.a.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., page n.a.

¹⁴¹Op.cit., not paginated.

¹⁴²Op.cit., page n.a.

been raised and a general “tidying” accomplished.¹⁴³ Lethaby’s involvement in actual planning efforts was quite limited. There appear to be only two proposals for which one can find any degree of elaboration and/or development—1) his proposal of 1896 focusing on a new avenue to be cut from the Thames to the British Museum and 2) his competition entry of 1903, with Halsey Ricardo, for the planning of the Letchworth Garden City. The first of these seems really to have been a self-initiated proposal which Lethaby inserted in his 1896 lecture “Of Beautiful Cities”; the second is of perhaps more significance since Lethaby was part of one of three teams of competitors to attempt a scheme for England’s first Garden City.

Both of the aforementioned will be discussed in more detail further on, but before doing so, several other planning-related connections might be mentioned. It can be noted that Lethaby, while serving as Shaw’s chief designer, had some involvement in a significant urban enterprise in London, the construction of Bedford Park. Shaw, whose involvement with this community began about 1878, had nothing to do with the planning of it and thus, one may assume, neither did Lethaby, but Lethaby did, as noted in Chapter I, have some involvement in Shaw’s individual commissions in this new community. Another planning connection with the realm of town planning was Lethaby’s acquaintanceship, probably friendship, with Edwin Lutyens, who, after making some notable contributions to the corpus of Arts and Crafts architecture in the earlier years of his practice and like Lethaby, serving as a leader in the Art Worker’s Guild, went on to distinguish himself as the planner at New Delhi. This undertaking, incidentally, Lethaby publicly appreciated. Lethaby also had some contact with another prominent figure in the realm of town planning, Patrick Geddes. In 1899, Geddes approached Lethaby in regard to designing a block of flats in Chelsea for students. Lethaby was willing. He asked fellow architect and

¹⁴³Similar observations have been drawn by Peter Davey in his book, The Architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement (1980). Davey described Lethaby’s position as asserting that urban improvement should start humbly and gradually develop. He wrote that Lethaby’s call was for gradual but deep and thorough city reform, and noted that Lethaby’s point of view is echoed in the words of the Arts and Crafts’ other major theoretician of the second generation, C.R. Ashbee, who had said that there should be improvement “little by little from within—let us have a wise body of ordinariness, a park or lung here, the gradual development of a zone-system first in this, then in that city; let us have green-belts round all our cities” (pp. 116-118, Davey’s book; the quotation from Ashbee comes originally from Where the Great City Stands, London, 1917, p. 67).

friend F.W. Troup to collaborate and, inspired somewhat by student hostels in Edinburgh, they prepared drawings. The project was later abandoned, however, but whether this was on Lethaby's initiative or otherwise is unknown to this author.¹⁴⁴

Finally, in the context of Lethaby's specific connections to planning, it is worth mentioning (again) his connection to the London County Council's Architect's Department, since through its many works, the Council has had a large effect on the face of London. Alistair Service has observed that most of the architects employed by the Council's Architect's Department in the time period after the Housing and Work Class Act of 1888 had given the body new powers to try to effect social amelioration, were Morris-type Socialists and disciples of Webb and Lethaby.

In the early years the Department was only responsible for housing, but this in itself involved some significant undertakings. After some bad fires in London in 1897, however, there also came to the Department responsibility for building a large number of new fire stations. In 1908 architectural work required by the London School Board was also given to the LCC architects. LCC projects, which, through the multiplicity of its undertakings brought a reality to Lethaby teachings at a scale larger than individual buildings. Notable projects of the LCC from the late 1890s into the 1920s that may be traced to Lethaby's influence include the Millbank Estates (Waterloo Road); Boundary Road Estate; Totterdown Fields Estate (Cottages at Tooting) and the suburban estates at Hammersmith and Tottenham. Also, there were the huge Single Working Men's Lodging Houses in Drury Lane and those at Deptford, as well as the Shoreditch Housing Estate, the Hammersmith School of Art, St. Martin's School of Art, the Hammersmith Trade School for Girls, the St. Marylebone Grammar School (London), and Lethaby's own redoubt, the new London Central School of Arts and Crafts on Southhampton Row (completed 1905).

In Lethaby's lecture of 1896, "Of Beautiful Cities," he advanced a specific proposal for the improvement of London—one which would have involved extensive effort and expense. This was his scheme for a new major street to be cut, with attendant improvements, from Waterloo Bridge to the

¹⁴⁴"The Architecture of W.R. Lethaby" (1957), op.cit., pp. 91-92, Master's Thesis, David Selby Martin.

British Museum. Waterloo Bridge, Lethaby thought, was the most “splendid modern monument” that London possessed and the British Museum was described as that “great representative building of Central London.” Lethaby identified what he believed to be the principal, though unrealized, axis of modern London: “By a most remarkable chance, the line of Waterloo Bridge, carried northward heads straight for the façade of the Museum, and southwards, is continued to the Obelisk, the point of the star of roads of South London. This line is the axis of modern London.”¹⁴⁵ He then divulged his idea:

Making an avenue from Waterloo Bridge to the Museum would alone almost give an organic system to London. Such an avenue should be wisely extravagant, wide full of trees, and preserved from carriage traffic, for which, indeed it would be too steep. It would open up the river to the heart of London, and, properly managed, it would be easy, by reason of its steepness, to make the river visible from any part of it, even from the steps of the Museum. The river is now as nearly as possible wasted to us, whereas the blue of it, with the passing traffic in summer, and the wheeling gulls in winter might furnish delight unending.¹⁴⁶

The avenue Lethaby proposed was to be a special kind of thoroughfare, not having utility at the base of its *raison d'être*, but the fulfillment of a larger, more symbolic function for the city.

The main avenue was further described thusly:

Our main avenue, with its freedom from vulgar traffic, should be a Sacred Way, a place of fountains and trees, where statues might be erected to the ‘Fortune of the City,’ and to the city fathers—Erkenwald, our forgotten saint; Majors Fitz-Alwin, Fitz-Thomas, and Walter Herve; Bishop Braybrook; Stow, the humble chronicler; Chaucer; Wren, the first and last ‘great’ architect...¹⁴⁷

The new avenue could not be construed as another commercial thoroughfare: “All attempts to make such an avenue an artery for cabs and omnibuses would be worse than useless, and would only lead to the destruction of Waterloo Bridge as inadequate for increased traffic...”¹⁴⁸ Along with the realization of a

¹⁴⁵As found in *Art and Life...* (1897), p. 105. Lethaby considered the other two nodal points of central London to be Westminster Abbey and St. Paul’s.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 107.

new major avenue, Lethaby proposed that “the short alleys opening from the strand to the Thames should also be widened so as to give recurring sights of the river.”¹⁴⁹ Other work would include the following:

At the head of the avenue the Museum should be opened out to Oxford Street, forming a good big space into which would jut Hawksmoor’s church. Here also should stand the Egyptian Monument now on the Embankment. Where the road intersected the Strand, a monumental stone might be placed for [a] Golden Milestone and Omphalos of the City and the world.¹⁵⁰

Lethaby saw the construction of the avenue as the key undertaking from which future physical improvements in London would easily spring:

Once grant the existence of such a half-mile of avenue, done with sufficient nobility of purpose, all future improvements would certainly fall into place, without any large and violent change in the direction of the streets which have grown up along the coursed of bridle roads and field paths. For instance, whenever—if ever—civilization is carried to South London, some improvements would be devised having relation to this axial line.¹⁵¹

Many years later, in 1921, Lethaby published a sketch of his 1896 proposal in The Builder as part of his article “Planning, Composition and Block Form.”¹⁵² It is not clear whether this illustration dates from 1896 (it did not appear with his essay of that date that was published in 1897) or if it is a later pictorialization of this scheme. In either event, one can understand more clearly in the drawing the new open space which had been proposed to front the British Museum and the proposed positioning there of the Egyptian obelisk, relocated from the Embankment. Also, it can be seen from the drawing that parts of Drury Lane would become a boulevard under Lethaby’s plan, and the overall run of this street straightened somewhat. Downhill, nearer the Thames, changes in the Lyceum are indicated and there would be a new open space near the Lyceum and Somerset House. One can also see the place where

¹⁴⁹Ibid. p. 106-107.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 108. It is interesting to notice Lethaby in the 1890’s, despite his anti-imperialist views, envisioning London (in the last lines of the excerpt) as a place to be marked as the center of the world.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Oct. 7, 1921, p. 451.

another monument—a stone set up for symbolic purposes (the Omphalos?) would be set up. This was where the new avenue would intersect the Strand. Although Lethaby reasonably projected that there would have to be no “large and violent change in the direction of the streets,” it is clear that the construction of the new avenue, at least would entail massive architectural destruction because the existing buildings in the vicinity, as Lethaby observed, hewed tightly to the narrow and more winding streets upon which the new one was to be superimposed.¹⁵³

Lethaby’s second major planning proposal was his competition entry, with Halsey Ricardo, for the planning of England’s first Garden City, Letchworth. Peter Davey has reported that in October, 1903 Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, two architects that Lethaby must have already known, were asked to compete with Ricardo and him and two less well-known architects (Geoffrey Lucas and Sydney Cranfield) for the planning post of this first garden city.¹⁵⁴ Parker and Unwin won and became, as Davey has observed, “the chief interpreters of the new movement.”¹⁵⁵

It is worth commenting on a few of the features of the Lethaby/Ricardo scheme in contrast to that of Parker and Unwin and that of the other two architects.¹⁵⁶ C.B. Purdom, in commenting on the one by Lethaby and Ricardo, observed: “It will be seen that they conceived of the town as a compact unit, surrounded by tree-lined avenues. The town centre, with a campanile, was placed on the east of the Pix brook, the latter being made a feature of the plan.”¹⁵⁷ Purdom pointed out that the main north-south road in this scheme ran through the town square and that part of the existing Norton Common was to be built upon. The residential part of town was to consist of a series of blocks around internal green quads, placed

¹⁵³“Of Beautiful Cities” (1896), as found in Art and Life... (1897), p. 108. Davey, op. cit., also discussed Lethaby’s proposal, observing that this half-mile avenue and a green belt around London (brought up in the study earlier in the discussion of Lethaby’s various suggestions for urban improvements) “were the only ‘grand’ proposals Lethaby produced for planning great cities.” (p. 116).

¹⁵⁴Davey, p. 172.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶The plan by Lethaby and Ricardo and the winning entry by Parker and Unwin are reproduced in C.B. Purdom’s The Letchworth Achievement, 1963, p. 15.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 16.

between the ancient Icknield Way and the existing Hitchin to Baldoch road.”¹⁵⁸ The industrial area was to be located to the northeast. “The layout,” Purdom commented, “suggests that the town-country idea was given thorough consideration.”¹⁵⁹

From a personal viewing of the layout, a few additional features may be worth noting. One is the “V”-shaped ordering of the two main traffic arteries, one of which goes from the train station to the town center with only one major interruption (caused by the interposition of a square) along the way. Both of these arteries are shown tree-lined. A third street, also apparently of fairly major importance, was also to be lined with trees. There is only one curvilinear street shown in the plan, although there are a few others composed of “broken” segments. “Border” avenues are shown on the West, East and North.¹⁶⁰

Parker and Unwin’s original plan, by contrast, provided a different location for the train station and less development on the other side of the track. In this plan there is one major tree-lined street extending from the station to the town center and beyond. This major axis has a different orientation from the Lethaby/Ricardo plan. One can also note that in the Parker and Unwin plan there are a number of “radial” streets originating at the central square. The central part of this plan, organized by the radial elements, is more compact—suggesting that activity is intended to be concentrated more in one quadrant. Unlike the Lethaby/Ricardo plan, peripheral streets do not seem so significant. In the plan by Parker and Unwin, there are two “crescent”-shaped streets but no more freely curvilinear ones. One street does circumnavigate the main square in a regularized way—one block out.

The third competition entry, by Lucas and Cranfield was described by Purdom as a “rectangular plan,” centered on the railway line (with portions east and west of it) and bounded by the more-or-less parallel existing Norton Road and the Hitchin to Baldoch Road.¹⁶¹ The town center in this scheme is east

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰The reproduction in Purdom’s book (The Letchworth Achievement) as available to this author, was too faint to see any great detail.

¹⁶¹Purdom, The Letchworth Achievement, p. 116.

of the center as built, midway between it and the Pix Brook. Norton Common was made a focal point. In this scheme the railroad station was to adjoin Norton Way and the industrial area was to run along both sides of the railway through the center of town. “Thus,” Purdon noted, “from the railway the town would [appear to] be pre-eminently industrial.”¹⁶² This last plan, then, unlike the other two, does not appear to have addressed the aims of accepted Garden City theory. What made Parker and Unwin’s plan preferable to the one by Lethaby and Ricardo is not obvious. Perhaps it is rooted in the stronger nucleus and more compact arrangement of the Parker and Unwin plan.

Lethaby’s friend Ricardo did eventually work at Letchworth (see for example, his house there of 1905).¹⁶³ Other architects Lethaby knew from Arts and Crafts circles also were involved in the early English Garden Cities. Lutyens’ church at Hampstead has already been mentioned, and, in the same suburb Townsend provided, probably, the designs for Numbers 135-141 Hampstead Way (c. 1912).

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, Lethaby’s general attitudes, insofar as they might affect his views on town planning and the environment, have been discussed. This included his interest in the general “interconnectedness” of things and the relationship of this view to his political beliefs and general attitudes about society. Next, Lethaby’s criticisms of towns and the environment were brought up with industrialization and indifference being the sources of many of the problems he identified in his specific criticisms. Following this section came a discussion of the more positive ideas Lethaby had about towns and the environment. In this part were first discussed Lethaby’s ideas about how one could draw inspiration from past cities (especially Athens, with its “city-spirit”) and from abroad (especially Germany, with its sense of commitment to improving cities and its love of order). Next in this part came a discussion of the major themes that run through Lethaby’s prescriptions for a better urban environment, broken into three

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³A view of the house is reproduced in Service’s *Edwardian Architecture and its Origins* (1975), p. 421. Ricardo and Unwin collaborated on an article about town planning and environmental issues in 1920, “On Citizenship,” which appeared in the *R.I.B.A.J.*, Jan., 1920.

chronological groups, and an additional one discussing those interesting comments by Lethaby for which a date is not known.

The main themes were shown to be a concern for “order,” “control,” beginning improvements with the small, everyday things, the roles to be played by architects, government and the press, the importance of public art and a knowledge for history, and not last in significance, “town love” and the impact of good citizenship. After this discussion of Lethaby’s ideas generally, some commentary was offered on his involvement with planning practices and with planners and also some discussion of his ideas as advanced through his specific proposal for London in 1896.

Lethaby was an architect who wrote a great deal about architecture. His writings on this subject frequently show an awareness of larger considerations than those demanded in traditional architectural practice. This wider view of architecture was not common for an architect of Lethaby’s time.

Robert Macleod has said that although Lethaby eventually lost out to Geoffrey Scott as a result of the latter’s challenge of Lethaby’s approach to architecture, Lethaby remained, even after this philosophical battle, a potent influence in the area of planning.¹⁶⁴ Into the fourth decade of the twentieth century, Lethaby certainly continued to provide, as Ruskin and Morris had earlier, a wide audience in England with what Francoise Choay called the “Culturist” point of view about urban questions.¹⁶⁵

One area of Lethaby’s theory which is an important part of the province of Lethaby’s thoughts concerned with the city and the environment has been given only minimal attention in this chapter. That is the area of preservation. Lethaby’s writings on preservation and his activities as a preservationist are among his most important contributions to architecture and merit a sustained separate discussion. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter a discussion of this subject, though closely related to that treated in this chapter, will be addressed in a separate chapter—the one following.

¹⁶⁴Macleod, p. [4?].

¹⁶⁵Choay, p. [?].

CHAPTER XII

THE PROBLEM OF THE PAST...ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Introduction

Lethaby's contribution in the field of preservation is as significant as that relating to new architecture and to his work as an historian and teacher. His thought and activity in the preservation area can be linked in a number of ways to his other concerns and pursuits. For example, as part of Lethaby's vision for good overall living conditions (including the quality of urban life and environmental conditions) was his concern for the retention of the structures of past cultures. Man needed the physical links with the past provided by architecture from other periods.

Besides his efforts to preserve older architectural fabric, there is Lethaby's own architectural work which may be regarded as another kind of preservation effort. Lethaby attempted to retain some link between his work and whatever he regarded as the antecedent to his design.¹ With the church at Brockhampton or at Melsetter House, for example, he attempted to tie his design to the particular building tradition, including local variation that he thought appropriate. Ideally, Lethaby wished his buildings to be "modern" (that is, of their own time) but at the same time linked, through forms, construction methods and other means, to the past. The care he took in researching past architectural works and the success he had in transferring his knowledge and enthusiasm about them led to the kind of expanded appreciation which would have been beneficial to their preservation.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of Lethaby's contributions as a critic (primarily through the written word on preservation issues). The power and insight of Lethaby's thought thus described, particularly his efforts to make people aware of past and present preservation problems, is impressive. The second part of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of the positive aspects of Lethaby's

¹ This is easier to discuss in regard to his independent commissions than with the work he did while in Shaw's employ because the question of authorship of particular features need not be brought up in the former case. There does seem to be, however, a uniformity of approach, as far as establishing links to the past, between his work at Shaw's and later, independent work.

thinking concerning preservation and his views on the ideal state of things as far as preservation is concerned. Lethaby was in some sense effective implementer for Ruskin's and Morris' approach to preservation, an approach which maintained that there should be only minimal tampering with existing buildings.² Lethaby took a mostly negative stance in criticizing "restoration" activities of his time. Following Webb's example, Lethaby advocated strongly for a minimally-invasive method of undertaking preservation operations. The third part of the chapter is devoted to Lethaby's non-literary contributions to preservation. In this context Lethaby's activity as an important volunteer in the labors of the SPAB will be discussed, as well as work he did for compensation in the preservation area. In the case of this last-mentioned, it should be noted that Lethaby had the opportunity to demonstrate successfully on a large scale and for a significant period of time the benefits of his approach to preservation, an approach which was a radical departure from accepted practice concerning old buildings and one which can be regarded as a turning point in preservation methodology.

Criticism—General

One first might look at evidence of Lethaby's general attitude towards what had happened in preservation efforts in the recent past. Lethaby was hardly the first English writer to call attention to the excesses of nineteenth century efforts at "restoration." He was, however, an articulate voice in this cause and, as his career developed, he began to reach in England a very large constituency. Even in 1890, before his involvement with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, one can see his attitude towards the destructive effects of "restoration": "When all the real Gothic has been altered into sham Gothic, that enthusiasm also will have evaporated."³

² Some discussion on the provenance of Lethaby's ideas on preservation is also included.

³ "Cast Iron and Its Treatment for Artistic Purposes" (1890), *Journal of the Society of Arts*, Feb. 14, Vol. 38, p. 853. Later in the decade, a kindred spirit, Walter Crane, pointed out that the nineteenth century "...has [had] been more destructive than the great fire as regards old London..." and, more generally, the century had "done more to obliterate the past in our cities than any former one..." ("Of the Decoration of Public Buildings" (1896), *Art and Life*..., pp. 116 and 121, respectively.)

In 1906, in an article on preservation, Lethaby offered an articulate indictment of the way architecture surviving from the past had been treated in recent times, emphasizing that nineteenth century imitation could never replace the real thing and that even inserting the imitative work alongside the real was injurious:

While the branch of Archaeology dealing with the science of old building was being built up by experts were naturally betrayed into mistakes by delight in their method of comparison and the consciousness of learning, by which they could see to some extent the completed form of fragmentary buildings; their mistakes, however, were manifold. They did not, in their eagerness, think of the difference between the mere imitation of an old monument (a model at full size as it were, of what it might have been) and the actual living building itself. They, as is well known, to bring the old and the new into ‘harmony,’ often took away the oldness of the old part and made all new; and when they did not do this, they refused to see how they wounded the old by placing their office-made conjectures by the side of the actual works of art which they thought they were improving. It is impossible to tell of the involutions of error and confusion which have followed; the maddening contradictions of learned ignorance, of careful violence, of loving destruction, which has arisen in the application of the [restoration] method.⁴

At the end of the preceding series of comments, as shown in a paraphrasing of Lethaby’s remarks appearing in the RIBAJ, Lethaby focused on the continuance of undesirable preservation operating under a new name: “Restorers acknowledge that harm was done in the past, and then with professions of sympathy and...do likewise, taking the new word ‘repair’ in place of the old word ‘restoration,’ but with similar result.”⁵

In the second decade of the twentieth century, Lethaby offered a similar but more bitter and cynical view of the preservation efforts of the preceding century:

⁴ “The Preservation of Ancient Architecture” (1906), initially a talk given at the Architectural Conference and repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 235-236. Ruskin was quoted by Lethaby: “...it is not enough that it [a building] has the form if it has not also the power and the life...” (Architecture, 1911, p. 184, 1955 ed.; source is Ruskin’s writing not given).

⁵ “Conservation of National Monuments,” (n.d., but probably 1906, page n.a.). The sense of these lines about the act of doing something similar to “restoration” under a new name is also found in the 1906 Architectural Conference talk: “...with all professions of understanding and sympathy they [architects today] go and do likewise.” (Op. cit., as found in Form in... (1922), p. 236). Similarly, in regard to the use of new terminology for the same bad old practices, Lethaby wrote in 1925: “The beautiful word ‘Restoration’ covered all up, and it must be confessed that we find we can do much the same things under the titles of repair or improvement.” (Philip Webb, from the 1935 repub. as a book of Lethaby’s series of articles in The Builder, p. 145).

About 1860 many gifted men seemed really to have thought that they were Gothic architects, and that they could supply thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth century buildings at demand. Thus they had little hesitation in applying the process called “Restoration” to our ancient buildings, for, in any part were imperfect, they could make it good and as it ought to be. They always, indeed, saw the restorations of other men, and even their own, were failures as soon as they were irrevocable.⁶

In Lethaby’s 1906 talk and article, “The Preservation...,” he observed that if architects would be content to write about their theories as to what the correct restoration of an old work might be, no harm was done to the object of their attention (the building itself), but architects who built their theories, he said, destroyed the evidence itself, ensuring confusion for all time about the facts. Lethaby mentioned the many published theories about the correct restoration of the Parthenon and the Erechtheon, citing the continually shifting opinions as evidence against architects who proceeded on possibly incorrect assumptions, to try out their theories in stone and mortar.⁷ He also complained that the effort of Gothic Revival architects to be “Gothic” spilled over into their preservation activities with unfortunate results.⁸ In later years Lethaby continued to underline the general uselessness of reproductions of old works, as in 1925:

“The bandying of catchwords seems to have prevented the experts from seeing that a name was not the same as a thing, that you could not have an ancient building, put up to-morrow, that age and authenticity are essentials of historical art, and that weathering and the evidence of age are necessary for our reverence.”⁹

⁶ Ibid., p. 184.

⁷ “The Preservation of Ancient Architecture” (1906), as repr. in Form in..., p. 241. Similar views to those expressed in the preceding material had been put forth many years before by Ruskin. In The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849). Ruskin wrote of architects who believed “they could raise the dead” but this was for him “...a lie from beginning to end. You may make a model of a building as you may of a corpse, and your model may have the skill of the old walls within it as your cast might have the skeleton with what advantage I neither see nor care; but the building is destroyed,” (quoted in Quiney’s J.L. Pearson, 1979, p. 185; the particular source in Ruskin’s work not identified). Also, Ruskin had written of the futility of restoration: “It means the most fatal destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false descriptions of the thing destroyed...it is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture.” (Quiney, Ibid.)

⁸ Macleod, in Style and Society (1971) has noted the difference between preservationists of Lethaby’s type and the Gothic Revivalists: “For, effectively, the preservationist said that their own time, as opposed to all previous in history, was incapable of contributing to the story of architectural development. This marks the great change from the attitude of the Gothic Revivalists.” (p. 53).

⁹ As in Philip Webb, 1935 publ. in book form of Lethaby’s 1925 series on this subject in The Builder, p. 145.

The following passage also shows the consistency of Lethaby's opinions in 1925 with those from 1906 and 1911:

It is impossible to give any notion of the violences and stupidities which were done in the name of "restoration." The crude idea seems to have been born of the root absurdity that art was shape and not substance,...when the architect had learned what his text-books taught of the styles he could then provide thirteenth or fourteenth century "features" at pleasure, and even correct the authentic ones.¹⁰

Preservation Criticism About Domestic Conditions

Specifically about England, Lethaby complained in 1906, focusing on the misuse of preservation funds: "...everywhere the custodians of our fabric of old buildings make a few verbal concessions and go smiling on their pre-destined way, while subscriptions obtained for urgent repairs are frequently transmuted into carvings and stained glass."¹¹ The Church of England bore some of the blame, Lethaby said, for the process of destruction through "restoration": "The Church has been one of the great spending powers of our time. It must have spent millions of money turning authentic into Bunkum."¹² Later, in 1920, some comments by Lethaby on painting included his lamentation about the damage he believed had occurred to the English landscape. In reference to landscape paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy, he wrote, "To paint so much 'leaving out'...hearts may well fail. As Morris said of one of Fred Walker's 'Idylls,' 'But 'tish't like that.'...indeed, our composed landscapes have been canvas screens put up between us and our desecration of England."¹³ In 1923 Lethaby found support for his point of view much earlier (1864), in the pages of an organ which, paradoxically, was also a major generator of enthusiasm

¹⁰ Ibid. In Lethaby's "Renaissance and Modern" (TS at Barnstable), he did allow that reproductions might have some value but that architectural activity might continue under the impression that it was possible to legitimately design in one of the past styles was untenable: "Something might be said for the culture value of exact copies of famous ancient works. But setting up buildings in the supposed 'styles' of past ages is entirely feeble and futile. (no date, p. 7). Later (1927) in *The Builder*, there is a comment attributing a thought by Lethaby on the occasion of his retirement as Surveyor to Westminster Abbey: "Restoration as a rule, restores nothing. It destroys far more than it restores..." ("Professor Lethaby's Retirement," 16 Dec., 1927, p. 927).

¹¹ "The Preservation of Ancient Architecture" (1906), as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 238).

¹² *Scripts and Scraps*, (n.d.), Alfred H. Powell, editor, p. 17. Orig. source in Lethaby's writing not given.

¹³ 1920, "Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy and the Higher Criticism of Art," *The Hibbert Journal*, June, 1920, as repr. in *Form in...*, 1922, p. 177.

for the very Gothic Revival which fueled the nineteenth century “restoration” activity. Lethaby wrote, quoting from the Ecclesiologist: “What with scraping, altering, rearranging, restoring, and under whatever names this nineteenth-century demon discovers himself, we are doing our best to obliterate all that our fathers have left us.”¹⁴

In 1921 Lethaby phrased his criticisms on how mistaken attitudes about buildings from the past had affected the preservation of old works in a way addressed more specifically to England:

...our highly educated, or sophisticated, way of looking at our national works of art as so many specimens of ‘style’ instead of as sacred antiquities has not only led to our futile efforts to design in ‘the same style’ (in other words, to build up-to-date antiquities); but it has set a screen between us and the monuments, so that we cannot know them for what they are, and thus we lightly alter and destroy according to taste.¹⁵

In 1925, Lethaby bemoaned what had been done to England’s architectural inheritance: “Our fathers have laboured, and we have entered into their labours to alter and destroy. The churches where the forefathers of the villages sleep have been made smart with flashing brass, glass, and tiles, and our cathedrals have been bedizened.” Lethaby commented that “this yearly destruction of a diminished store” of England’s treasury of old buildings could not go on for long.” Lethaby praised his mentor Webb for his attitude towards the past: “Loyalty to the ancient things of the land became part of Webb’s central soul-self—his religion.” Writing of the England of Webb’s younger days and the beginnings of major undertakings of “Restoration” Lethaby wrote: “Beyond the downright loss by destruction [of old buildings] a specially specious attack labeled ‘Restoration’ was in his time developed and worked up to a

¹⁴ “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” Part II: “Science and Christopher Wren,” The Builder, 2 Feb., 1923, p. 204.

¹⁵ “Modernism and Design,” Part VII: “The Uses of Antiquity,” The Builder, July 1, 1921, p. 7.

fury. By this means an old building could be tricked out to appear like a new thing provided by contract from the best London shops...”¹⁶

Almost at the end of his life came another plea by Lethaby for a better-founded appreciation of England’s ancient buildings. In Lethaby’s address of 1930 at the Fifty-third Annual Meeting of the SPAB, he noted (as paraphrased in *The Builder*), that these ancient buildings: “formed a chain, not of history, but of actual continuous existence back into the far past. They were growths from the soil rather than products of will and artifice. [But] We were likely to look on them with discriminating admiration—judging them by taste and nodding our heads.”¹⁷ Lethaby also suggested in the aforementioned talk that his countrymen were more sensitive to damage to old architecture in other countries than they were to that in their own. He said (again as paraphrased in *The Builder*):

It was rather curious that we seemed to be much more sensitive of injuries to ancient works of art when travelling abroad than we were at home. He had read keen observations on dreadful things done in France, Italy and Germany. But such doings seemed different in our cities, and we prepared the way by calling them “necessary improvements.”¹⁸

Preservation Criticism about Specific English Places

Lethaby’s criticisms of past and present preservation activity were sometimes focused upon particular places. *The Architects and Builders Journal*, reporting on a paper given by Lethaby at the Architectural Association (“Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn from It,” 1915) paraphrased Lethaby on the subject of London thusly: “There was a tendency to begin any improvement of London by pulling down the few fine things we had, such as the noble terrace in front of the National

¹⁶ Quotes in this paragraph as found in Philip Webb (1935), pp. 144-145. This was a repub. of Lethaby’s 1925 series in *The Builder*. On the subject of *machinery* (in a negative context) vis à vis English architectural “restorations,” Lethaby also observed in 1925 “...a Saxon or Norman church might be made to look as if it had been gone over by machinery, and the people loved to have it so.” (Ibid.)

¹⁷ “Protection of Ancient Buildings,” *The Builder*, 13 June, 1930, p. 1142, covering Lethaby’s address of May 30.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Gallery and the Nelson column.”¹⁹ In 1923, in his series in The Builder entitled “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” also with reference to London, Lethaby quoted from John Weales’ book on the city (c. 1840-1850) because of Weales’ appreciation of architectural antiquities and for his criticism of the practice of “restoration.” English building might be divided into four periods, Weales had written, and the most recent of these was introduced thusly:

[There was] the admission of a plurality of styles. This period is distinguished by unbounded licence and fancied liberty, though really enslaved to vulgar dictation that has no idea of art but in deceit. It is the age of counterfeits, the age of “restorations” and of mock antiques. In such an age peculiar interest attaches to the relics of the first period [the earliest English architecture]. Always beautiful, even when first executed, [these] have now acquired the beauty of being the only honest, the only real objects, amid a wide waste of hollow counterfeits. This is what constitutes their inimitable beauty and priceless value; and this is why, without antiquarian spirit, we must mourn over the number of these precious irrecoverables lost from year to year. The ravages of fire, commercial cupidity, and worst of all, the forgery called “restoration,” have left this metropolis [London] only four considerable portions of works of the age of unpretence.²⁰

To this Lethaby added approvingly: “This is quite a remarkable utterance for the decade 1840-1850. The author goes on quite scientifically to call all modern ecclesiastical efforts ‘pseudo-Gothic’.”²¹

Discussing London’s St. Paul’s, in the same series, Lethaby quoted The Ecclesiologist of 1864, in regard to the unfortunate tampering with Wren’s work there:

Wren knew very well what he was about; he was too great a man to deserve to be tampered with by any of the Browns and Robinsons of the present day. Have we any reason to be satisfied with what has been done at St. Paul’s? If there was a case in England where one ought to have hesitated before touching a line it is this, Wren’s greatest work. Has any advantage been gained by the alteration of the choir, the displacement and possible destruction of the fine iron gates and grills; the removal of the beautiful organ screen?...From no single point of view has the cathedral been improved. And even if to our eyes additional beauty were gained, it was still a barbarous act to alter such a work as this. Had the committee settled what must be destroyed and what is to be done, or are they going on,

¹⁹ “A Discussion of Modern German Architecture,” in the journal mentioned, Feb. 3, 1915, p. 54.

²⁰ “Testimony,” Part IV of the mentioned series from The Builder, April 6, 1923, p. 567. John Weale (1791-1862) was a well-known English publisher, especially on architectural and engineering subjects.

²¹ Ibid.

patchwork fashion, without any definite end or purpose...Church authorities cannot do worse with their funds: they had better throw the money away.²²

In Lethaby's study of Webb of 1925 Lethaby reprinted a letter written to Thomas Carlyle read at the first Annual Meeting of the SPAB (June 21, 1878). Lethaby used it partly because "it applies to the same violence toward our [London] City churches which we hear today?" The letter to Carlyle, from a kindred spirit, about the Wren church threatened in the 1870s, included the following:

I can have little hope that nay word of mine can help you in your good work of trying to save the Wren church in the City from destruction; but my clear feeling is, that it would be a sordid, nay, sinful, piece of barbarism to do other than religiously preserve these churches as precious heirlooms; many of them specimens of noble architecture, the like of which we have no prospect of ever being able to produce in England again.²³

In 1926, in his plea for the preservation of the Foundling Hospital in London (to be discussed in more depth later), Lethaby listed London's recent architectural losses:

What might London have been if, even in the time of our own memories, development could have been guided so as to spare its beauties and antiquities, while planning and tidying up in between! In the last generation, beyond minor losses too many to be numbered, we have destroyed Crosby Hall, the one example in London of a great City Merchant's dwelling of the Middle Age; Newgate [Gaol], probably the most expressive work of architecture by a follower of Wren in England [George Dance the Younger]; the Old Post-Office in St. Martin's-le-Grand, a dignified public building of most careful workmanship; the school of Christ's Hospital, a pleasant old building of red brick, an original of the type architects have been imitating; the delightful row of houses, attributed to Inigo Jones, the Great Queen Street; Covent Garden; the Rolls Chapel, a XIIIth Century treasure, and some of the City Churches. All these, which I have known, will never be seen again. Within the last few years, Devonshire House has been torn down, and a great mass of a modern hotel planted on its fine site. At the present moment, the Bank [Bank of England?], the most representative building in the City, is being demolished save for its outer wall, which is to become—and we must be grateful for this concession—the basis of a tall new erection.²⁴

²² Part II, "Science and Christopher Wren," The Builder, Feb. 2, 1923, p. 204.

²³ Philip Webb, 1935 repub. of the 1925 study of Webb, p. 148. Carlyle's Past and Present (1843) is also said to have been an important catalyst in preservation circles.

²⁴ Introduction, The Foundling Hospital and Its Neighborhood pamphlet, 1926, 1st page.

Lethaby noted, in this same period that Waterloo Bridge: “the most worthy memorial structure in England, and perhaps the finest bridge in the world,” had been condemned by the London County Council. Also, he voiced in the pamphlet concern about the condition of St. Paul’s and about a bill being promoted which would make it easier to tear down several city churches “on sites which have been occupied by churches from Saxon and Medieval days. Furthermore, “old” Regent Street was gone and he added that “most of our quiet Squares are invaded by vulgar advertising buildings.”²⁵

As for Lethaby’s concerns about preservation in other places in England there is the example from 1906, when, in the pages of Country Life he took to task the restoration work on Exeter Cathedral.²⁶ About twenty years later Lethaby mentioned this work again in an uncomplimentary appraisal of Sir Gilbert Scott’s career: “The cathedral-restoring business was very thoroughly organized by him, and most of them passed through his office. I remember seeing Exeter Cathedral under the operation in 1874, with some puzzlement, but I thought it was ‘restoration,’ and it was.”²⁷ Also in this 1925 series on Webb, Lethaby commented on the activities in Oxford of one Gilbert Scott’s professional progeny, G.E. Street. Street, he observed, with seemingly no intent to compliment, “did much ‘restoring’ of churches” there.²⁸ He used a recollection of Webb’s from the latter’s days in Oxford to score the practice of “restoration”: “Webb remembered a great sundial at All Souls, worked out and set up by Christopher Wren, and destroyed in the name of art and restoration by some eminent ‘restoring’ architect.”²⁹

Lethaby also reviewed a book on an Oxford church (St. Martin’s, Carfax) wherein he expressed his regret at the loss of this landmark to the city: “Oxford men have lost a landmark in the city that they

²⁵ Material in this paragraph also from The Founding Hospital... pamphlet, p. 11.

²⁶ “Restoration Work at Exeter Cathedral,” op. cit., 15 Dec., 1906, p. 857, Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.

²⁷ Philip Webb, 1935 repub. of Lethaby’s 1925 study, p. 67.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

love—Carfax has gone.”³⁰ He pointed out that even after there was consensus about demolishing the church, there was no such conviction about the tower, which was lost, rather, through “restoration.”

Lethaby selected from the book:

We never dreamt that the tower would be handed over to an aspiring architect as a corpus vile, whereupon he might exercise his unbridled fancy; still less that he would propose, by casing it in rubble, removing the battlements, and loading it with ornament to transform it beyond recognition by those once familiar with it.³¹

In the review also, Lethaby emphasized that beauty as perceived by the present generation should not be the criteria for deciding how to treat an object from the past and again quoted the book’s author to strengthen his contention that such a monument as the Carfax tower spoke to society more effectively than can literature about it:

As to whether Carfax tower is such a thing of beauty as to be worth preserving for the delectation of the aesthetic faculty, Mr. Fletcher does not think it worth his while to discuss the point. He assumes—and rightly assumes—that men and things may deserve to be kept up with loyal respect and affectionate gratitude, even though they may be other than fair to look upon. We have not yet come to this, that we will have no ugly heroes. The right way to look at such a historical monument as this is very well set-forth in Mr. Fletcher’s concluding words:

‘An ancient monument is a record of the past, to destroy or obliterate which would in one respect be worse than the destruction of a book of civic history. For while antiquarian literature is read by comparatively a very few, it is by monuments like Carfax tower that the past history of their city speaks to all the citizens’.”³²

A few years earlier, in his series from 1918, “A National Architecture,” Lethaby criticized nineteenth century architectural work on the Chapter House at Salisbury in a caustic passage:

At Salisbury, where the Chapter House followed the type of construction of that of Westminster, the iron ties were actually cut out as not in accordance with nineteenth century

³⁰ Review of A History of the Church of the Parish of St. Martin: (Carfax), Oxford by H.M. Fletcher (published date n.a.), as publ. In The Chronicle (date n.a.).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

thirteenth century-ism. So strange and subtle are the “twistifications” of fine taste! In an age of style-simulations, even the real things had to be re-made into shams!”³³

In 1921 Lethaby recalled what had been done to a smaller structure of significance in Wiltshire, the birthplace of Christopher Wren:

My last installment was written in the Wiltshire village where Christopher Wren was born. There one may buy on a post card a view of the home in which he lived. The house itself was torn down about forty years ago; the inscription on the post-card says ‘being unfit for human habitation.’ It was a pleasant-looking old thing, and it may have been carefully assisted to become unfit, and it interfered with the view from a grand new “Jacobean” house built at the time. The proceeding and excuse are typical of what we do and how we do it. The word “Jacobean” doubtless helped to make the murder of the old building easier, for the new house is at least twenty times as full of the “style” as the old one, and probably it never occurred to the persons concerned that one was more real than the others.³⁴

In his writings on Webb from 1925 Lethaby recounted Morris’ visit to Ely in 1855 and the latter’s words about the “restorations” there: “It [the cathedral] is so horribly spoilt with well-meant restorations, as they facetiously call them...”³⁵ Restorations at Canterbury and St. Albans were also deprecated in these writings by Lethaby:

Professional reports would run: “The Tudor roof is incongruous with the Early English chancel arch, and it should be replaced by a thirteenth century roof of steep pitch.” At Canterbury a wonderful twelfth-century tower was destroyed to put in its place a nineteenth century “fifteenth-century” erection. At St. Albans eleventh and fifteenth century work were both destroyed to satisfy the whims of a lawyer-lord. It never struck anyone that antiquity is being old. The beautiful word “Restoration” covered all up, and it must be confessed that we find we can do much the same things under the titles of repair or improvement.³⁶

³³ Part VI, Wall, Arches and Vaulting,” *The Builder*, 8 Nov., 1918, p. 299. Lethaby’s criticism of nineteenth century work at Westminster Abbey itself will receive some special treatment later in the chapter as part of a discussion of Lethaby’s role as Surveyor there.

³⁴ “Modernism and Design,” Part VII: “The Uses of Antiquity,” *The Builder*, 1 July, 1921, p. 6. A year earlier, also having to do with the preservation of the residences of prominent people, Lethaby spoke for the preservation of the Dean’s House at Wolverhampton (in “Architecture as Form in Civilization,” 1920, as repr. in *Form in...*, 1922, p. 5.)

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 143. Original source of Morris’ words not given.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

Problems with the Vernacular

Besides directing his concern toward the condition of specific historic architectural monuments, Lethaby showed that he was very much concerned with England's vernacular architecture as well. In 1920, in The Athenaeum, he wrote of what he considered to be the very serious problem of repairing and preserving old cottages. They were, he said, an important part of the essence of "England" and were irreplaceable:

To destroy all the old cottages of the land which are not up to a living standard would so alter our countryside and villages that much of England would be destroyed with them—the "Old England" we talk about so plentifully. To destroy these cottages would be like a preliminary step to asphaltting the country all over. These dear cottages vary from district to district as the soil varies—they are dialects of building, and hold history and emotions which we cannot plan and specify and contract for. Of timber, stone, flint, granite, cob, brick; roofed with thatch, tiles and stone slabs,—they grow out of the ground and are as natural as rabbits' burrows and birds' nests—they are men's nests (!). Yet the aggregate number of the unfit must be enormous, for they have been terribly let down and each one is a special problem.³⁷

Three years later, in an introduction to the pamphlet Home and Country Arts, Lethaby called for saving the country's cottages because they were, he said, a fundamental part of the idea of England. He included the interesting idea that the cottages were important to the preservation of the English landscape as well as being worthy individual vernacular objects:

[in one district in England]...I was distressed to see the number of cottages which are decayed almost beyond habitation. Some were actually torn down, one has its thatch roof fallen in...I have noted similar sad facts in other districts and there must be some general causes now at work which leads to the withholding of timely repair and to the ultimate destruction of our English cottages. This is a very large question indeed from many points of view; from that of the landscape and of the character of the country it is of tremendous importance. More than anything else, these cottages, I suppose, form the thought of England in our minds.³⁸

³⁷ "Housing and Furnishing," as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 41. The notion of preserving cottages as "dialects" of the language of English building is an appealing etymological metaphor.

³⁸ 1924, second ed. (first ed. in 1923), pamphlet published by Home and Country, the NFWI (National Foundation of Woman's Institutes) Magazine, London, p. 11. Information kindly provided by Professor Walter Creese, University of Illinois, Urbana.

In 1930, Lethaby enlisted the eminence of Wordsworth's Guide through the District of the Lakes (1835):

...I must add that many of these structures (cottages or "dwellings" or "fire-houses" [as Wordsworth calls them]) are in themselves models of elegance, as if they had been found upon principles of the most thoughtful architecture. It is to be regretted that these monuments of the skill of our ancestors, and that happy instinct by which consummate beauty are produced, are disappearing fast.³⁹

Lethaby reminded his readers that Wordsworth's words were written some time ago and that: "The injury done since is more than could have been calculated upon..."⁴⁰

Criticism of Preservation Activity Abroad—General

In the address "The Preservation of Ancient Architecture" (1906) Lethaby said that he did not hesitate to protest against restoration abuses in other countries and urged foreigners to respond in kind to those occurring in his.⁴¹ Regarding the state of preservation affairs on the Continent, he said: "Unless this age of change and destruction is soon followed by one of anxious preservation there will be little left which is truly ancient to hand on to the Europe of the next generation."⁴² There was also this gloomy note regarding preservation in Europe:

Notwithstanding all the destruction[s] wrought in the last century, restoration is going forward at an accelerated rate all over Europe, and, of course, it is precisely the most ancient, remarkable, and beautiful buildings, which are laid hold of, passed through the mill of the erudite restoration, and left desolate ghosts of themselves, ghosts to shudder at and pass on.⁴³

³⁹ "Art and the Community," Part I: "Wordsworth's View of the Aims of Art," The Builder, Jan. 10, 1930, p. 55. Parentheses in the quotation are Lethaby's; brackets are by this author.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 238.

⁴² Ibid., p. 242.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 236.

Later, in 1925, Lethaby quoted similar words by Morris (dating from 1878): “It is sad to think that our children’s children will not be able to see a single genuine building in Europe.”⁴⁴

Criticism of Specific Preservation Activity Abroad

Sometimes, Lethaby singled out specific European preservation issues for commentary. In 1906, he did so sardonically, using three instances in France, Germany, and Italy respectively, as examples of failed efforts:

To tell of these things is too sadly absurd: Of St. Front at Perigueux, which excited so much interest in France that they made it over again with learned corrections; of Charlemagne’s wonderful chapel at Aachen, a riddle which has never been read, where they are covering over the fine old masonry with fashionable marbles and mosaics like those in the smoking room of a hotel; and of Murano Cathedral, where the once mysterious and romantic apses now look as if they had been supplied from some cathedral factory in Chicago.⁴⁵

Also in the 1906 address, Lethaby criticized restoration work in Ravenna—at San Vitale and the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia and in Venice—at St. Mark’s. He then passed on to a citation of related French mistakes, and finally to England:

At San Vitale, Ravenna, astounding things have been going on for years under the direction of a learned scholar, but again it is the trivial, the obvious, and the vulgar which result from all this arrogance of learning... Everyone knows of the existence of a few wonderful old windows filled with sheets of translucent marble. The restorer simply cannot resist a chance like this of falling into a pitfall. Few and mysterious, are they? That is just what he wants, so with the help of the marble contractor he exploits them until they become a mere restorer’s joke, and the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia looks like some grotto lit through yellow glass. The mosaic of St. Mark’s, the west front of Rheims, the porches of Chartres, the glass of

⁴⁴ Philip Webb (1935 repub. of the related 1925 articles from *The Builder*), p. 143. The specific source of Morris’ words is not given. Lethaby expressed these thoughts much earlier, as indicated by the following paraphrasing of Lethaby’s words from 1906 in the article “Conservation of National Monuments,” in the *RIBA Journal*, *op.cit.*. “We can hardly go to any famous building in Europe without finding extensive [restoration] works in progress; and unless there is soon some great change of policy there will be little left that is truly old to hand on to posterity.” (page n.a.).

⁴⁵ “The Preservation of Ancient Architecture,” repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 237. Ruskin had complained of restoration work in Italy (at Pisa) in 1845 and ten years later Morris complained of bad restoration work in France (as well as in England)—(from D.S. Martin’s thesis, “The Architecture of W. R. Lethaby,” 1957, from the included Chronological Index).

Bourges, Chartres and Sens—the great things of the world—all are being dealt with while we talk. As for England, I could tell many stories but I know too much to trust myself.⁴⁶

In a passage about the column capitals at St. Mark's, Lethaby wrote that no one could say easily if any of the originals were still in place. Six sixth century ones were in private collections in London, he said, and that he had looked for three more in Venice but that all three had been cut out of the building fabric or replaced by “exquisitely mechanical copies of fresh white marble...”⁴⁷

Lethaby, in 1906 also, said that he was “filled with astonishment” at what had been done and was being done in Europe. Everything, it seemed, was in the process of being restored. How could it be done, he asked, after all that has been said in protest?:

...I wonder in Italy that they do not realize that their ancient buildings give that country its pre-eminent value in the world; I wonder in France that their quick intelligence and artistic insight have not guided them in this question;—but most of all I think I wonder at the things which are being done in Germany, the land so justly famous for its historical criticism. Baedeker's guides to North and South Germany are hardly any longer indexes to old buildings so much as chronicles of restorations completed or in progress.⁴⁸

In Lethaby's writings on Philip Webb there are notable passages about Continental restoration activity that often take the form of bringing up someone else's opinion or actions. Lethaby referred, for example to Webb's criticism of the alterations undertaken at the church of San Miniato al Monte in

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 237.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 239. Lethaby in another place had commented on the Cathedral at Chartres, with regrets about its current condition: “Oh that Chartres, the clean and gay of it, and the wall flowers in the old masonry; no people will ever see it again as we did even, and what must a' been in Ruskin's time.” (*Scrips and Scraps*, Alfred H. Powell, editor, p. 17. Original source in Lethaby's writings not given).

⁴⁸ “The Preservation of Ancient Architecture,” *op.cit.*, p. 242. The same year, one can find Webb writing to Lethaby expressing his concern for restoration work in France. Responding to communications from their mutual friend and architectural colleague Noel Rooke (1881-1953), Webb said: “Rooke's ‘woe's me's’ about the ruthless goings on in the way of refinements of cruelty with make believe—in mid-France sorrows me...” (Webb to Lethaby, Oct. 27, 1906, letter in possession of John Brandon-Jones).

Florence. Webb's friend, the Italian architect and preservationist, Giacomo Boni was also mentioned by Lethaby as a "distinguished scholar and protector of the monuments of his native land."⁴⁹

Lethaby in 1925, writing on Webb, had used excerpts from correspondence between Webb and Boni as evidence that Ruskin's ideas and those of the SPAB had spread to Italy.⁵⁰ The SPAB, Lethaby also noted, had intervened with a planned "restoration" of St. Mark's in 1880 although what role the English organization played and what affect its interference had was not told.⁵¹ As to French preservation activity, Lethaby quoted Ruskin writing from Abbeville in 1848: "...all the houses more fantastic, more exquisite than ever, alas not all, for there is not a street without fatal marks of restoration...I seem born to mourn over what I cannot save."⁵² Three years later in his series in The Builder, "Architecture, Nature and Magic," Lethaby wrote of still another French work, St. Ouen and what had befallen it: "St. Ouen must have been astounding when it rose uninjured amongst a crown of Abbey buildings; but now, in that cold square and a front no better than Cologne and Nave all scraped! The spirits have flown."⁵³

Certain heroes and villains of the Continental "restoration" wars surface in Lethaby's writings. The involvement of Ruskin, Morris and Webb, and the SPAB in Continental preservation crusades has already been mentioned. Lethaby in his review of the Frenchman, Emil Hovelague's book Comment on Restaure Versailles (published around the turn of the twentieth century), criticized the methods of Viollet-le-duc

⁴⁹ Orig. in The Builder in 1925, as publ. as the book Philip Webb in 1935, pp. 160 and 163, respectively.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 165.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 160.

⁵² Ibid., p. 143.

⁵³ This series which looks again to some extent, at the subject treated much earlier in Lethaby's Architecture, Mysticism and Myth was published posthumously in book form in 1956 under the same name as the article series. The quote cited can be found on p. 37 of A.H. Powell's Scripts and Scraps (1936), op.cit., book version. Lethaby's published comments on specific preservation situations in Europe seems to focus on France, Italy and Germany but there is evidence that other places were also of concern. In a letter to Lethaby in 1903 Webb complained (this time about destruction by non-architects): "Here, another grievance—some German sight-seers (according to Newspapers) have been chipping pieces from the columns of the Parthenon, as relics. The time is bad for sentimental fellows. We'll live on 'hope' that the papers...have lied again." (June 2, 1903, letter in possession of John Brandon-Jones).

and praised the attitudes and efforts of Hovelague and the writer Victor Hugo.⁵⁴ In 1906 Lethaby mentioned again the protests made by Hovelague against restoration as well as those of the Austrian historian Strzygowski, the Italian Boni and his English mentors Ruskin and Morris.⁵⁵ Hugo is also brought up much later, in 1923, in *The Builder*. Then Lethaby wrote, “I wish, indeed, I could put my hand on a flaming attack by Hugo on the destroyers who call themselves restorers, ‘murderers of ancient works of art.’”⁵⁶ In his 1925 series on Webb, Lethaby illustrated Boni’s service to preservation by quoting a letter from Boni to Webb from Venice about protective legislation for Italian buildings.⁵⁷

Theory (Solutions)—Dissemination

Lethaby wrote no tome on architectural preservation. Several of his major writing efforts, however, contain significant, influential commentary on preservation. Also, a number of talks and articles address the topic. Besides these, a large portion of Lethaby’s writings generally contain some commentary on preservation-related issues.

Lethaby’s widely read book, *Westminster Abbey and Kings Craftsmen* (1906) is probably his most influential literary work as to disseminating his views on preservation. It is primarily a history of the Abbey but in it he also criticized recent architectural work undertaken there. Lethaby used the forum provided by the book to delineate his departure with the prevailing methodology of architectural

⁵⁴ “How They Restore,” *Architectural Review*, Vol. 5, Dec. 1898, p. 14. Webb indicated, in some correspondence with Lethaby about the same time, what his view was towards the restoration activity of the prominent French architect Viollet-le-duc. Webb, writing probably in reference to the central doorway of the Madeleine Portal at Vézelay wrote: “Rooke...sent a picture p.-card of it to S.C.C. [mutual friend Sydney Carlyle Cockerell]...who left it with me, ‘tis an astounding piece of sculptured work. And, by good luck, not tampered with by the Viollet. (Webb to Lethaby, correspondence in possession of J. Brandon-Jones, no date, but possibly c. 1906.) Viollet-le-duc gained a reputation as a restorer in France equal to Scott and Wyatt in England.

⁵⁵ “Conservation of National Monuments,” *RIBA J*, page n.a. This can probably be associated with Lethaby’s RIBA-sponsored talk “The Preservation of Ancient Monuments” (1906).

⁵⁶ “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” Part IV: “Testimony,” 6 April, 1923, p. 567. Lethaby said Hugo’s attack had been published about twenty-five years earlier.

⁵⁷ In the letter Boni said: “...the purpose of my journey to Rome was that of preparing the ground for our new law of protection of those monuments which, being property of private people or separate communities, have been under no control whatever until now.” (As per the 1935 book version, *Philip Webb*, p. 165, date of letter not given).

preservation (that is, the methodology of “restoration”) and strongly advocated that his approach be adapted for future activity relating to the fabric of the Abbey.⁵⁸ The Twenty-fifth annual Report for the SPAB (1902) also contains Lethaby’s views on Westminster Abbey and its restoration. This predates the more widely-disseminated criticisms found in his book on the Abbey. In 1920, The Times carried some further material by Lethaby about the Abbey (“The Abbey Buildings”).⁵⁹

The same year that Lethaby’s book on Westminster Abbey was published he gave an effective talk, “The Preservation of Ancient Architecture,” to the Architectural Conference.⁶⁰ There was also, from the first decade of the twentieth century, Lethaby’s “Plea for the Preservation of Whitgift Hospital,” published in the RIBAJ in 1909.⁶¹ About the same time, his writings published in the organ of the Society of Antiquaries are exceptionally appreciative of work from the past. Also, two introductions to works by others were vehicles for the expression of Lethaby’s views on preservation—one in 1919 for Winefride de L’Hôpital’s book Westminster Cathedral and its Architect and one in 1926 for Ann Page’s booklet The Foundling Hospital. Near the end of his life, Lethaby contributed to the text of the 1930 SPAB Annual Report and the same year, for Home and Country, he wrote the preservation-related “Old Buildings and the Land.”⁶²

It should be also be noted that the SPAB was by far the most important preservation organization in which Lethaby participated and one which he came to lead. Lethaby also was a member of the Society of Antiquaries, which was concerned with preservation matters as well.

⁵⁸ More will be said later in the chapter in a discussion of Lethaby’s professional activity in connection with the Abbey. Paul Biver, in his book L’Église Abbatiale de Westminster of 1913 wrote approvingly of Lethaby’s methods and his contribution to the Abbey’s preservation as Surveyor. (Another early preservation-oriented writing, the review “How They Restore,” has already been mentioned).

⁵⁹ Another newspaper carried the review, op.cit., previously mentioned, that Lethaby wrote for the book on St. Martins (Carfax) at Oxford.

⁶⁰ This was repr. in Form in... (1922), possibly Lethaby’s most widely read bound volume. The RIBAJ of 1906 carried the account “Conservation of Ancient Buildings,” op.cit., which also appears to be related to Lethaby’s Conference talk in that year.

⁶¹ Nov. 20, 1909, p. 77.

⁶² His part in the SPAB report was entitled “The Preservation of National Monuments.” The Builder (June 13, 1930) carried a summary of his related May, 1930 address to the SPAB 53rd Annual Meeting.

Provenance of Theory

Lethaby's views on preservation are derived from a number of sources. Generally, these grew from his perspective of history (especially recent and especially architectural), and from his politics. Among specific sources of inspiration were past writers, such as Wordsworth, Carlisle and Weale in England, and Hugo in France. Also, the pages of The Ecclesiologist were apparently influential for him. Lethaby's greatest debt, however, is to Ruskin, Morris, Webb and through them the SPAB. In his 1925 series on Webb Lethaby quoted Ruskin and Morris as oracular sources on preservation matters. For example, in 1925 from Ruskin: "Do not let us talk of restoration. The thing is a lie from begging to end," and: "I do believe I shall live to see the ruin of everything good and great in the world, and have nothing left to hope for but the fires of judgment to shrivel up the cursed idiocy of mankind."⁶³ Such views could easily be, and were taken as, Lethaby's own. At the end of his career Lethaby still acknowledged Ruskin's (and Morris') influence. A comment about the damage done by restoration in a talk to the Fifty-third Annual SPAB meeting, as paraphrased in The Builder, shows this:

Another point which we learn from Ruskin and Morris was a sense of value in what had not been meddled with; or only dealt with in most reverent care. All felt this of a picture, a Turner or Reynolds; if it had a patch on the sky or a nail hole through the cheek it was greatly injured. This was similarly true of works of masonry which had been wounded; and above all, had been wantonly wounded.⁶⁴

Further, at this time, Lethaby acknowledged a debt to Morris in regard to preserving old work intact—that is, preserving its integrity without molestation. As paraphrased in The Builder, using an anthropomorphic allusion:

⁶³ These quotes are taken from the 1935 posthumous book version, Philip Webb, p. 143, orig. publ. as a series of articles in The Builder in 1925.

⁶⁴ "The Preservation of National Monuments" (1930), op.cit., p. 1142, a report on Lethaby's May 30 address. Morris, like Philip had been trained as an architect in G.E. Street's office but did not later practice architecture on his own.

[In past days of the preservation struggle] ...we were often informed that an ancient building would be destroyed, but its interesting features would be preserved—which seemed almost as ridiculous to Morris as saying that somebody had to be murdered, but that his nose and eyes would be preserved in a bottle. It was the whole thing, the whole being, with the grey walls and mossy roof, its integrity and mystery which touched him—he loved with his heart. In him was some re-emergence of antiquity.

At this meeting also Lethaby spoke more of Morris, of his force, intensity and depth at SPAB meetings of old. He recalled Morris saying that the doctrines of the SPAB were so obviously reasonable that everyone around would come to see the truth “just as the last old building was destroyed.” Again about restoration, Lethaby, as paraphrased in The Builder: “The thought from Morris which he...would most like to leave with his audience was this: The results of ancient labour was sacred. And that was why a real ‘anti-scraper’ did not like to meddle with anything which once existed.”⁶⁵

A slightly different kind of bond must have governed Lethaby’s relationship with a third person of major influence in his thinking about preservation, and much else. This person, Philip Webb, was, like Lethaby, a practicing architect. In his series of articles on Webb of 1925, Lethaby told how his mentor had thought out the principles of preserving ancient works and how he had applied those principles successfully. Repair as a proper methodology owed much to Webb, he said: “Demonstrations were given and the admirable results to be obtained by frankly obvious supports, splicings, and neat-handed patchings.”⁶⁶

Lethaby mentioned specifically Webb’s preservation work at East Knoyle, Oxford, Forthampton and Eglwys Cummin (in Wales). Of St. Mary, East Knoyle, Wiltshire Lethaby wrote that hundreds of such churches had been “stripped to the bone to be bedecked with tinsel and trumpery but that this one, a church ‘entirely repaired by Webb’ in 1890 “is a perfect example of what tender dealing with an old and infirm building should be.”⁶⁷ Lethaby commented also on Webb’s work on an unstable tower in Oxford:

⁶⁵ All quotes in this paragraph from the reference just cited, p. 1142.

⁶⁶ Orig. 1925, as publ. in the bound volume Philip Webb (1935), p. 158.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 107. This project is near Webb’s famous country house “Clouds.”

A thirteenth century font in which Christopher Wren was baptized in Oxford was scraped [a term related to the “Anti-scrape” or SPAB movement]...almost beyond guarantee of authenticity. The tower, built of small flint work, was manifestly failing, and in a really dangerous state; but Webb repaired it in such a way as to give it greater strength than ever it had, without in any way impairing its authenticity and the beauty of age.⁶⁸

The previous examples emphasize Webb’s careful manner in the repair of old work. At Forthampton Court, near Tewkesbury, an ancient “rambling” house in bad shape at the time of Webb’s involvement, the “lesson” to be learnt apparently had to do with the sensitivity with which Webb approached providing additions to the old fabric: “...the addition was low and modest having walls covered with roughcast plaster, stone slates on the roof, and tall, plain chimney stacks.”⁶⁹

Also, in his 1925 series of articles on Webb, Lethaby provided an excerpt from one of Webb’s letters about London wherein preservation was defended and the economical nature of the SPAB’s preservation activities (in which Webb had a leading role) was commented on:

We do find it strange indeed that the richest country and city in the world grudges to the arts the few feet of ground that these ancient monuments occupy...These buildings are nearly all doomed, and are coming down, church after church...we have met with a tendency to saddle on us an undue regard for certain forms of art. We desire to declare emphatically that the Society [the SPAB] has neither the will nor the power to enter into any “battle of the styles,” and it counts amongst its members persons of every shade of artistic opinion. Our enemies are the enemies of the work of all styles alike.⁷⁰

Quoting in 1925 another excerpt from a letter written by Webb, Lethaby indicated that Webb was probably a source of (or at least a reinforcement of) his belief that architecture expressed strongly the people who created it:

⁶⁸ Ibid. Lethaby quoted Webb, writing of the “restoration” of St. Mary’s spire (at Oxford): “I was too cowardly to face the wrecking of this great historical monument.” (Philip Webb, 1935 book version, p. 6), specific source in Webb’s writings, date, etc., not given. Webb’s work at Eglyws Cummin, between Garmarthen and Tenbe also involved the repair of an old church—actually done by William Weir (in 1901) under Webb’s direction. (Philip Webb, as in 1935 book, p. 108).

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 105.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 148. The date and addressee of this letter is not provided.

...it will be impossible to imagine this deep reverence for building as a primary art and near necessity of life. An old house or church is a human nest built with the hearts even more than hands—the hearts of ancient men in the land. The destruction of a living building was a sort of murder, “you see, it’s my grandmother,” Webb would say. The operations of restorers he once called “ruthless refinements of cruelty and make-believers.” Architecture was a folk art, having a common tradition behind individual whims and ills, and shaped by the very nature of things—a revelation of humanity.⁷¹

Lethaby used another of Webb’s letters to depict him as the exemplary preservation-aware architect, one who would not put his professional talents in the service of the undesirable alteration of old buildings.

Lethaby quoted in 1925 from a letter Webb wrote to a client:

You will be able to advise your friend Mr. Gaskell that if he wants to know how not to do anything to such notable works as the medieval building at Wenlock (which I went to see some two or three years ago) I should perhaps advise him as well as most architects. But if the reverse is his intention he would only find me a hindrance instead of a help...⁷²

Other early luminaries of the SPAB had their effect on Lethaby also. The great Thomas Carlyle was a founding member. Lethaby’s interaction with the SPAB was a two-way affair. First Lethaby drew from it, later he led it in its activities. Throughout the years of his involvement with the society, even when his personal influence was greatest, he appears to have always stayed true to the group’s earliest principles and never sought to change the organization’s nature and direction from that initially determined by Ruskin, Morris and Webb. In his 1925 study of Webb Lethaby quoted from the SPAB’s preliminary (founding) statement, suggesting that he remained in accord with it so many years later:

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 144. Date and source of Webb’s words not given.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 112-113. Letter to Sir Balwyn Leighton, March 15, 1875. In a letter to Lethaby, Webb showed that he was also appreciative of Lethaby’s preservation efforts:

Thanks for your nudging of T. [Thackeray] Turner’s elbow [Turner was an early, perhaps the first Secretary of the SPAB] about the little Devonshire church. The devil’s continued dancing about, and mischievous fingering of our old buildings tire my vexed spirit continually. The mischief and [----ness] [preceding brackets are Webb’s], the word could be “madness”] with what Booley and Kempe (I believe) have done in the beautiful little Ch. of Oringdean—hard by here, irritated me much—though, it must be said the meddling had been done with ‘taste’ but real in-appreciation wears that Cloak [i.e., taste] too often.

(n.d., letter in possession of J. Brandon-Jones).

It is sad to say that in this manner [thoughtless destruction] most of the bigger Minsters, and a vast number of more humble buildings, both in England and on the Continent, have been dealt with, by men of talent often, and worthy of better employment, but deaf to the claims of poetry and history in the highest sense of the words. Now what is left we plead before our architects themselves, before the official guardians of buildings, and before the public generally, and we pray them to remember how much is gone of the religion, thought, and manners of time past, never by almost universal consent to be restored; and to consider whether it be possible to restore to those old buildings the living spirit, which, it cannot be too often repeated, was an inseparable part of that religion and thought, and those past manners.⁷³

Summarized in his writings on Webb of 1925 were the main tenets of the SPAB “as expounded by the founders.” Lethaby said nothing to deny that these were as valid then, as the second quarter of the twentieth century began as in the earliest days of the Society. These, as listed by Lethaby, were:

1. Ancient works of art are valuable, national possessions (they belong to society collectively). They are treasures.
2. Civilization does not mean anything in the abstract. It has to rest on the tangible foundation of its past.
3. Age itself is its own source of value. “To some minds [apparently Lethaby’s also] antiquity itself has a claim on their reverence and the marks of age are guarantees of authenticity.” [that is, the work must look old as well].
4. Adding sham parts is as much forgery as forging Raphaels.
5. Regarding additions: “If, however, additions must (as we say) be made, they should be as unobtrusive as possible and frankly modern...” [They must not only be modern but also unobtrusive].
6. Regarding repairs: They should a) be workman like; b) be obviously “protective” in nature; c) aim at conservation.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid., 146. The evangelical tone found in the SPAB’s First Annual Report is often detectable in Lethaby’s writing as well. Lethaby, in his study of Webb, also quoted the following from this SPAB report as follows:

The Committee cannot but regret, considering how widely-spread and rapid has been the destruction and falsification of our ancient monuments during the last twenty years, that some such society as this was not long ago called into existence; a society with the principal aim of guarding the life and soul of these monuments, so to speak, and not their bodies merely; a society that might have impressed upon the public the duty of preserving jealously the very gifts that our forefathers left us, and not merely their sites and names... (as found in the 1935 book version, p. 147).

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 156 and 157.

In his 1930 address to the SPAB, Lethaby again acknowledged the influence of this organization and the induced concern and indignation over the architectural destruction that had been going on under the name “restoration”: “Two or three things dampened my happiness [in earlier years]. One was reading Ruskin; another was attending the weekly meeting of this Society and gradually realizing the great change going on week by week in England, inevitably and remorselessly.”⁷⁵

Earlier in the chapter Lethaby’s criticism of preservation work abroad was cited but occasionally Lethaby drew inspiration from foreign activities. In “Architecture as Form in Civilization” (1920) he mentioned a German tract he had seen about the psychological value of ancient monuments to the national consciousness. There was something to be learnt from America also, for in this 1920 article he suggested that England should follow the lead of the historical societies of the United States because of their efforts in preserving old buildings and their work in marking historical sites.⁷⁶

Brief Comparison with C.R. Ashbee on Preservation

It is interesting to compare the preservation-oriented comments of C.R. Ashbee, Lethaby’s fellow Arts and Crafts practitioner and theoretician, with those expressed in Lethaby’s writings. Some that seem quite close to Lethaby’s point of view appeared in the 1917 work Where the Great City Stands. Ashbee commented here on the destruction of London, laying the blame on industrialization and commercialism:

The industrial utilitarianism which had begun with the greatest piece of vandalism in modern history—the destruction of ‘Old London Bridge, the wonder of the world’—destroyed everything that crossed its path. A factory and power plant was built actually on the chancel of Southwark Cathedral; Elizabethan palaces were turned into doss-houses and lunatic asylums; eighteenth-century London fared no better: men suddenly discovered that the stately Haymarket colonnades ‘harboured immorality,’ and they were cleared away for commercial purposes.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ “The Preservation of National Monuments,” TS (1930). For the address to the 53rd Annual Meeting of the SPAB, page n.a.

⁷⁶ As repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 4 and 5.

⁷⁷ Op. cit., p. 22.

The preceding words comment not only on the destruction of significant elements of London's built fabric but also on what Ashbee saw to be the culturally inferior replacements which were put up.

In these same years Ashbee similarly to Lethaby included foreign examples in his comments on preservation. In the 1917 book just mentioned, Ashbee observed how, based on a favorable reaction to Ruskin's writings at the end of the nineteenth century, "innumerable organizations" having to do with preservation were formed in the United States, as well as England's own National Trust.⁷⁸ In reference to the National Trust, the French were given credit for earlier positive action: "As usual, we laboriously followed after where the French with clearer vision in their 'Monuments Historiques' had pointed the way long before."⁷⁹ In explaining what should be the proper motivation for the preservation in his view, Ashbee included an American example among the English ones:

When, therefore, in our cities, we preserve, we should do it with two motives—historic association and intrinsic beauty. Of these, the second, so little understood, is by far the more important of the two, because it implies unity in life. Shakespeare, George Washington, and Turner may be dead; but the little house at Stratford-on-Avon, Mount Vernon in Virginia, and the Riverside Cottage at Chelsea have in them a quality of their own that will not die, unless through negligence, the blindness, the death of the race itself.⁸⁰

Ashbee could as well include America in negative commentary regarding preservation, as in this passage which terminates in an unpleasant racist allegation:

This preservation of the past had its evil side. Veneration began idolatry, at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, which tested every value, put this veneration to the severest test of all. The commercial mind saw money in it, dealing in old furniture became a mania, and thousands of beautiful houses, particularly in poverty-stricken Ireland, were wrecked and gutted for the sake of their ceilings, mantelpieces, and panelling. The movement ended in an

⁷⁸ Ibid. In another, later observation in the same work, about preservation in the United States, he referred, on a more negative note, to Boston's "pathetic efforts to preserve the amenities of Boston Common..." (p. 107).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 25. The passage continued with a positive reference, not completely unlike Lethaby's "national spirit," to "race consciousness."

orgy of bric-a-brac, in which the prices were kept up by American buyers and manipulated by gangs of Jews.⁸¹

Points of Lethaby's Theory—General Comments

In 1906 (in “The Preservation of Ancient Architecture”) Lethaby called for a new awakening to and communion with past cultures. This could be done through proper interaction with the evidence left by the people from the past.⁸² The Past was always firmly integrated into Lethaby’s thinking about the Present and Future. He argued that old buildings, not some record of them, was what was needed to preserve necessary links with the past: “We want not mere models and abstract shapes of buildings, but the very handiwork of the men of old, and the stones they laid. On the historical side, nothing else is a valid document to be reasoned on, and, on the side of feeling and beauty, nothing else can really touch our imagination.”⁸³ In 1920, in “Architecture as Form in Civilization,” Lethaby also wrote of the stimulus provided by history that could be touched: “Monumental history is a stirring, vital thing: It can be touched...the history that can be seen and touched is a strong and stimulating soul-friend...”⁸⁴

Walter Crane, Lethaby’s Arts and Crafts colleague had stressed, ten years before Lethaby’s 1906 talk, the cultural value of old architectural works. There were, Crane wrote, architectural survivors of other ages in most English towns: “...buildings full of historical association, and haunted with the romance of a past age...”⁸⁵ In regard to London Crane had written in 1896:

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 24. Lethaby’s references to nationalism in his writing seems to have a more ecumenical tone than Ashbee’s with his references to “race.” The negative reference by Ashbee to Jews is a little puzzling since he himself had one Jewish parent.

⁸² As repr. in Form in..., p. 234.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 235. In the RIBAJ, in the report on Lethaby’s talk c. 1906 (op.cit.), are similar words:

...the poetic and historic aspects of old buildings are dependent upon their authenticity. Such monuments are not mere records; they are survivals, while they preserve the handiwork of the men of old. On the historic side nothing else is a valid document, and on the side of feeling, nothing else can touch our imagination. (“Conservation of National Monuments,” page n.a.)

⁸⁴ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 5.

⁸⁵ “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings,” Art and Life, 1896, p. 121.

We live in a huge architectural conglomerate [London], an amalgam of many industrial and residential districts pressing around what was once the city of London compact within its walls. In this conglomerate traces of every period are found, back to the Roman foundation, and each succeeding period has left an increasingly important architectural deposit...⁸⁶

It is by no means certain that Lethaby would have agreed with the last phrase, that London's later works represented a deposit increased in richness over earlier works, but he would have concurred with the following comment from 1896 by Crane about the relationship between public buildings and the culture that provided it, as well as Crane's criticism of the destruction which had occurred:

The history and legends of localities should be carefully preserved, and identified with the public buildings—town halls, schools, hospitals, churches, and meeting places of all kinds. We might then at least get some public compensation for the public loss of beautiful and historic spots obliterated by the spreading of the town, and the jerry builder.⁸⁷

But old buildings, Lethaby said, whatever state they were in, should be cared for in a spirit of "proud guardianship."⁸⁸ Copies should never be thought of as adequate substitute for original works but, for what was already lost, a copy might serve a useful purpose. Lethaby lamented in 1906 that one could "substitute a copy for what remains of an original, but to copy it is to preserve a faithful record of it, while leaving the original untouched, which will carry on its interest until it fades to a mere shadow. What will the next generation most thank us for?"⁸⁹ Also, once "restoration" had been done, Lethaby said, it should not be altered further: "I would not meddle with even the restorations of a restorer."⁹⁰

A number of other points which illuminate Lethaby's general attitude about preservation are made in his writings on Webb in 1925. One is his notion that it was possible to appreciate a kind of conglomerate beauty that might emerge when one experienced a building that had been touched by a

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 116.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 144.

⁸⁸ "The Preservation of Ancient Architecture" (1906), op.cit., as repr. in Form in ..., (1922), p. 240.

⁸⁹ Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen... (1906), p. 373.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

number of diverse construction programs through the ages. One could as readily appreciate such a beauty as one based on unity: "...there is one beauty of homogeneity and another beauty of complex accretion."⁹¹ Also, there is a certain kind of "animism" posited in his description of buildings (particularly old ones)—they were living things. Quoting Morris, from the First Annual SPAB meeting, Lethaby said that the aim should be to guard the soul of a building, not just the body.⁹² Another point was that the preservation of old buildings might be justified because of their rarity—because they were in limited supply. Old buildings should be looked upon as gifts from our ancestors. The moral tones of Arts and Crafts-oriented thinking can be found in Lethaby's discussions on preservation. This is illustrated in Lethaby's argument that buildings should be preserved. To do otherwise would be to cheat the multitudes. A more technical point among his comments of 1925 is that repairs to old buildings should be obvious—these should not look as if they were part of the original work and they should be no more extensive than necessary. Referring to Webb's work on St. Mary's Church in 1890, Lethaby cited this as a perfect example of how work should be done on an older building. The idea, Lethaby expressed in humorous fashion, was that with Webb's procedure (only patching, where needed), one should not be able to see where the money had been spent.⁹³

The value of oldness itself was brought up again in Lethaby's address to the SPAB meeting of 1930. As paraphrased in The Builder: "...few seem to understand that the value of the ancient was being old." Here again, Lethaby emphasized the theme of reverence in connection with old work: "We were [are] all agreed that beauty should be preserved 'so far as possible,' and that antiquity should be protected

⁹¹ As repr. in the book Philip Webb (1935), p. 157.

⁹² Ibid., p. 144. This notion is found in some of his earlier writings also.

⁹³ The information in this paragraph from the just-cited source, p. 146. In "Housing and Furnishing" (1920) Lethaby wrote: "Old is old, and new is new..." One would not destroy the first and make the second into a sham antique," (as reprinted in Form in..., 1922, p. 42).

‘when not in the way,’ but the thought that all embodied labour [i.e., buildings] should be held in reverence was [is] likely to be far from us.”⁹⁴

Minimal and Persistent Conservation Action

A fundamental point of Lethaby’s preservation philosophy in dealing with old work, was that one should hold to the smallest possible area of operation adequate to correct a problem. Action should be prompted by threats to the fabric—decay, structural instability, threat of loss of the fabric, for example, and never because of “aesthetic” reasons. He wrote in 1906: “What is the alternative to this now customary method of dealing with old buildings? It is persistent care and repair, as of national treasure to be guarded. Instead of the long intervals of neglect alternating with great ‘restoration’ campaigns, we need constant examination and minute reparation.”⁹⁵

Continued Use

Lethaby also argued in 1906 that it was legitimate to expect continued use of old buildings as long as they were not damaged in the process of trying to make them more useful as seen in the light of contemporary requirements:

It is usual to object that old buildings are not in a Museum, and that they have to be maintained in use. All the better, use would not hurt them. We must try to be honest here, and not let our pretences about use lead up to their bedizenment. The use and stability of our Cathedrals have again been sacrificed for the caprices of ornamental restoration, profuse in carvings, stained glass, and giant organs. Why should we call a building sacred as a preparation to making it a vulgar fraud?⁹⁶

Public Support

In 1930, Lethaby stressed the importance of general public support, interest, and participation in preservation activity:

⁹⁴ “Protection of Ancient Buildings,” op.cit., p. 1142. Second quote also as paraphrased.

⁹⁵ “The Preservation of Ancient Architecture,” as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 239.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

The best defence against injury and loss in every district would be a generally diffused concern for the maintenance of local beauties and the prevention of neglect and vulgarization with a ready appreciation of good will (and works) in preservation. Well informed public opinion is what we need.⁹⁷

He also said then that local government and institutions could foster public support:

Perhaps someday the local authorities may find out a way of reorganizing parish patriotism.

Occasionally, let the subject at Institute meetings be on local beauties and their preservation. Then possibly a vote of thanks might be offered for some thoughtful care, or a protest made in regard to proposed injury or destruction. This really might have considerable influence, for our people are well-meaning and often act in misapprehension. The most terrible doings have been introduced in the past under the name of “improvements.”⁹⁸

People who would make the effort to save an old building should draw community notice, Lethaby suggested:

Serious questions of cost in the repair and conservation of...old buildings arise and they are coming to weigh more and more heavily on individual owners...All I can see in regard to this big question at present is that the man who repairs a dear old building is really a public benefactor and we must find ways of recognizing his well doing.⁹⁹

Organizations and Professions

Besides the general public, Lethaby believed that a number of organizations and professions were needed in preservation efforts. Limiting his focus to England, Lethaby commented in 1930 in the “Old Building and Land” essay about the activities of the SPAB and the National Trust:

Several societies are now working for the preservation of English country character and old buildings. The SPAB...is more than fifty years old. This society has not only urged preservation but has developed a science of repairing ancient buildings... An important National Trust for the acquisition of sites of special interest and old buildings has also existed

⁹⁷ “Old Buildings and the Land,” Home and Country, Sept., 1930, p. 447.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 448.

⁹⁹ p. 447.

for many years. Old cottages have been acquired by the Trust and repaired according to the advice of the SPAB and thus made sound and fit for habitation.¹⁰⁰

He continued, citing other important organizations which had had a positive impact on preservation efforts:

More recently the Society of Arts has started a fund specially for the preservation of old cottages. An appeal [of theirs] says: "Many of the most beautiful old cottages in England have been demolished to make room for "improvements" and many more are in danger of disappearing! Again more recently an influential Council for the Preservation of rural England (C.P.R.E.) has been formed..."¹⁰¹

Three other organizations which had influence more peripheral to the preservation cause were also mentioned: S.C.A.P.A., which controlled abuses of public advertising, the Commons and Footpaths Association, and the Surrey Survey, which endeavored to prevent litter and "untidiness" in country places.¹⁰²

As to professional groups, Lethaby singled out the R.I.B.A., which, he said in 1917, should have amongst its concerns about architectural education, the preservation of historical buildings.¹⁰³

Records

Artists had a role to play in preservation as well, although official organizations for artists were not mentioned in this respect. Lethaby commented in the 1890s: "Old architecture should be drawn before 'restoration' has too far falsified every building in the country. Such records will, at a day not far distant, be almost the only memorials of our ancient national architecture."¹⁰⁴ Also, in 1920, Lethaby told how

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 448.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³"Education of the Architect," as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 126.

¹⁰⁴"Arts and the Function of Guilds" (1896, orig. publ. in *The Quest*) as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 203. Lethaby apparently did not consider using photography.

painters could help in preservation: “Every town should have its pleasantnesses (if any) and its antiquities (if not torn down) recorded...”¹⁰⁵

Two years earlier, in “Towns to Live In,” Lethaby told how local schools of art could aid the preservation of English culture by forming collections of drawings and photographs of the antiquities in their particular town and district.¹⁰⁶ In his address to the SPAB Annual Meeting of 1930 Lethaby mentioned how old wall paintings were fading away. These should be copied in drawings, he said, framed and hung near the originals. Furthermore, he continued, every “scrap” of old painting and stained glass should be inventoried.¹⁰⁷

Vernacular Preservation

In the earlier discussion on Lethaby’s criticism of recent preservation developments in England, cottages were brought up as a preservation concern. A few more comments will be offered here as to the value Lethaby accorded these vernacular expressions and what he thought should be done by way of preservation activity concerning them. England’s old cottages, Lethaby said in 1920, were among the “prime essence” of the country.¹⁰⁸ They were cultural artifacts and “dialects of building.”¹⁰⁹ In 1930, Lethaby commented on the value of the common buildings of England: “The kind of building which we unconsciously think of as representative [of England] is not a great castle, on a crag, but a cottage with its well-kept flowering front garden...these buildings are extended works of nature bearing long histories and carrying forward very deep and ancient traditions.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵“Exhibitionism at the Royal Academy and Higher Criticism of Art,” *Hibbert Journal*, June, 1920; as repr. in *Form in...*, (1922), p. 181.

¹⁰⁶As repr. in *Form in...*, (1922), p. 30.

¹⁰⁷“Protection of Ancient Buildings,” *op.cit.*, p. 1143.

¹⁰⁸“Housing and Furnishing,” *op.cit.*, as repr. in *Form in...*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹¹⁰“Old Buildings and the Land,” *op.cit.*, Sept. 30, p. 447.

Lethaby's solution in 1920 for saving English domestic vernacular architecture called for action on the part of local architects. They should, he said then, see to it that these buildings had sound floors, walls and roofs.¹¹¹ Lethaby paid attention to the problem of vernacular preservation in 1930 also: "The repair and preservation of even the humblest old building like a cart-shed at the next corner of the road, are important."¹¹² The last phrase raises the interesting point that Lethaby discerned different scales in preservation. While the cart-shed might not be of national or even county-wide significance, it might very well be a landmark for a particular neighborhood and thus, deserving of some effort to save it.

Fragments and Tombstones

In 1930, at the SPAB meeting, Lethaby called attention to the problem of caring for tombstones in English churchyards. The appearance of these yards in general should be improved, he said, adding that some of the large, semi-urban churchyards in the London area were particularly "unlovely." Also, he said in 1930, better care should be taken of old fragments which still were contained in churches. They were of high historical importance, he observed. The association of some Norman stones at Westminster, he noted, had made possible a reconstruction [on paper one assumes] of the twelfth century cloister there and some double capitals at Southwark showed what the early thirteenth century cloister was like. In the gallery at the Temple Church a fragment of small twin arches in Purbeck marble was sufficient to show that the little recesses on the side of the choir ("now perfectly modern and commercial") were once "ancient." Lethaby said there must be hundreds, perhaps thousands of fragments throughout the countryside, implying that people should make efforts to save them.¹¹³

Preservation of Crafts

Another interesting aspect of Lethaby's preservation philosophy was the notion that not only should one try to preserve the works of the past but also their methods, as nearly as possible, if they were still

¹¹¹"Housing and Furnishings," op. cit., p. 41.

¹¹²"Old Buildings and the Land," op. cit., p. 447.

¹¹³All these 1930 comments as reported in The Builder ("Protection of Ancient Buildings"), op.cit., p. 1143.

known to anyone. The Builder in 1921 reported one of Lethaby's hopes related to this issue, namely:

"...that an attempt might be made to keep the handicrafts alive. While they [we] spent millions in maintaining art schools and building up crafts they were allowing the old English crafts to disappear."¹¹⁴

If some crafts were fated to disappear, Lethaby believed that at least there could be information collected as to the processes those crafts involved. This suggestion was made in 1913 as shown in the following paraphrasing of a talk by Lethaby taken from The Builder:

One need of the time, for if it is not done now it never can be, is to record so far as may be British building customs as they are still traditionally exercised. Ways of stone cutting as in East Yorkshire, where the masons dress a pretty herring-bone pattern on the face of their stones, ways of laying pantiles, of coating plaster ceilings with skim milk, and of putting tallow and salt into whitewash. Practical building wisdom of this sort should be gathered up and recorded.¹¹⁵

In the pamphlet House Painting (publication date not available) Lethaby delivered a message about that craft which advocated trying to retain the capacity to work in the old ways and recording information about these:

Our problem is slowly to add to our scope by experiment, and, at the same time, to resume as far as possible traditions of the past which have been neglected and forgotten...I would recommend especially the gathering up and recording of any decorative methods which still are carried on in any branches of the craft.¹¹⁶

Engineering

Several preceding passages have indicated that an important aspect of Lethaby's attitude regarding preservation was the large scope of his concern. It has been noted already that he was not only concerned with the protection of large and famous architectural works but also vernacular work. The churches, and the landscape itself, needed to be protected as well. Architectural decoration and the methods used by the

¹¹⁴"Professor Lethaby on 'Our Hope for the Future,' " 25 March, 1921, p. 279. A report on Lethaby's talk at the London Central School occurring ten days earlier.

¹¹⁵"Some Things to Be Done," February 14, 1913, p. 206. A report on Lethaby's paper of the same name was delivered at a meeting of the Architectural Association.

¹¹⁶Op. cit., p. 5.

crafts to achieve these and other tasks in the constructed arts also needed to be kept up. Lethaby's concern extended to engineering works as well. Examples include this comment about London from 1896:

"Waterloo Bridge as it stands is second only in importance to St. Paul's and must be preserved at any cost and sacrifice."¹¹⁷ Also, in the pages of Country Life, Lethaby indicated concern about the preservation of the Exe Bridge at Exeter.¹¹⁸

Whitewashing

A cornerstone of the technical side of Lethaby's preservation method was that all exposed masonry should be given a protective coating. This would apply to the humblest buildings on up. But, as there was a considerable reservoir of old masonry buildings in England that would be likely candidates for coating with whitewash, and since it was no longer common practice to do so, the chances of Lethaby being able to achieve this goal was remote. Even as late as 1930, however, in his address to the SPAB Annual Meeting, Lethaby brought up the subject of protective finished for masonry.

Lethaby said in 1930 that all external masonry, given England's climate and atmosphere, needed a protective skin—a kind which would be removed from time to time and reapplied fresh. He reasoned that unprotected masonry began to decay as soon as it was cleaned off and left exposed. It used to be customary, he observed, to finish stonework with external washes and in some cases to add bright color and gilding. People were pleased aesthetically with this, he said, but the real reason for doing it was

¹¹⁷"Of Beautiful Cities," Art and Life... (1896), p. 107. This bridge was again the object of his concern in 1925: "...the light way in which the serious metropolitan problem of Waterloo Bridge—destroy or reinforce?—has been considered by a large number of engineers, is deeply disquieting." ("The Engineer's Art," Architecture, July, 1925, p. 120.

¹¹⁸"The Exe Bridge, Exeter," 1906, p. 857.

practical. In more recent times, he continued, there arose the view that, whitewashing was vulgar—"what they do to cottages and pigstyes."¹¹⁹

In regard to rubble masonry, the custom Lethaby noted in the Middle Ages and at all times previous, was to plaster it. He pointed out that in ancient Greece even the great temples, if they were built of soft stone, received a white coating.¹²⁰ These practices should be resumed but, he said with some sarcasm, this would be greatly facilitated if there could be found some strange "art" name for it to cover up our "common sense." As paraphrased in The Builder, Lethaby recollected:

When he [Lethaby] first realized what was the ancient traditional way of treating masonry, he was...hurt in what he supposed were his aesthetic sensations. He felt that he would not "like it," as if that proved anything..."architecture," we thought, was ostentation; it should be "grand-like," whereas white or colour was reasonable and economical. Now that he knew more about the old custom and had...a deeper apprehension of the meaning of art, he was made miserable by the sight of unprotected masonry which was daily rotting away.¹²¹

The fact that English medieval buildings (cathedrals, castles, and other buildings) were covered with a protective finish is supported, Lethaby argued, by "overwhelming evidence." He cited many traces of limewashing still clinging to ancient walls. Also, the great external sculptures at Wells, Salisbury, Lincoln, and Exeter were protected by lime-wash and color. Even as construction progressed in the building of Westminster Abbey, the stone was whitewashed as soon as practicable. An earlier scholar's (Hudson Turner's) account of a situation at Troyes (France) in the fourteenth century was cited to provide

¹¹⁹The material in this paragraph from "Protection of Ancient Buildings," The Builder, June 13, 1930, pp. 1142-1143. See also, Lethaby's much earlier comment on the same subject in Westminster Abbey and the Kings Craftsman (1906). Whitewashing was also the treatment he recommended for stone sculpture exposed to the elements. In the 1930 address, Lethaby related that the previous year he had seen for the first time the Bowcastle Cross and other "north country" works of sculpture which had been placed in churchyards in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. They were still in good shape he said because of the "comparative purity" of the air but were weathering away. In their early days, Lethaby noted, these works were washed down and colored; every twenty or thirty years thereafter, a solution of lime was applied to them. These protective measures, he observed, were no longer done and the fate of all external sculpture in England had to be considered. In some cases, the object might have to be removed from its context to a more sheltered environment. (p. 1142).

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 1143.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, p. 1142.

further evidence as to the universality of the practice of whitewashing stonework.¹²² Lethaby further observed that the custom of periodic whitewashing continued longer in France than in England, maintaining that in 1757 the Abbey Church of St. Remi had been so treated. In his own time, Lethaby said, a tourist reported seeing one of the spires at Caen or Chartres newly limed over. In England, he pointed out, lime wash was still done in some of the more remote districts.¹²³

As for present-day London, Lethaby suggested that the Houses of Parliament should be whitewashed “from plinth to finials”; decay was out of control there. Furthermore, attention needed to be paid to all other “modern” stonework in the country’s big cities if a repetition of this situation was to be avoided. The damp and smoke in cities, Lethaby warned, produced a biting acid which argued for a protective skin for stonework. He punned about present-day buildings having to undergo a severe “acid test.” Westminster Abbey and St. Paul’s had been injured by the effect of smoke, he observed. Also close to being out of control, he said, were the bases (column bases) at the British Museum. Even an occasional washing down with water there would help, he said.¹²⁴

In the same 1930 address, Lethaby conjectured that the current annual cost of fixing up decayed stonework on England’s public buildings would be immense. Regarding maintenance of churches, he said that if the custom of limewashing had been continued, not only would more authentic buildings have been saved, but the millions of pounds spent in substituting copies for original works of art would have also. A principal part of architecture should be to avoid decay of the finished work, Lethaby believed.¹²⁵

¹²²Ibid. Lethaby reported that, according to Turner, the north transept at Troyes was only sixty years old in 1380, but already tarnished by the weather. Turner related that the Cathedral Chapter then had the whole gable and the rose-window stonework (and other portions) whitewashed.

¹²³Ibid., p. 1143.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 1142. (Source for all of the information in this paragraph.)

¹²⁵Material in this paragraph all from the just cited source. Lethaby mentioned a seventeenth century source from King James’ time (Dugdale) telling that smoke was damaging St. Paul’s even then. This source is quoted in a passage observing the “approaching ruin [caused] by the corroding quality of coal smoke, especially in moist weather, whereunto it [St. Paul’s] had long been subject.” (Ibid., further specifics on the original source not given).

Only months before his death Lethaby again voiced his conviction, in addressing the subject of church architecture that masonry exposed to the elements should be protected with washes. From The Builder, in early 1931:

All stone churches in the atmospheric condition of England, especially in our smoky cities, should be limewashed directly on completion and periodically afterwards. Unprotected soft stone begins to decay at once, and the charge [costs] that steadily accrues from the neglect of this traditional precaution is beyond computation. I know that people hastily say that they would not like it. It does not sound grand and all that. Once, I thought so myself, but now a soft stone building left in the wet, without an overcoat makes me shiver—it is so cruel.¹²⁶

Lethaby's Activities in Preservation—The SPAB, General Comments

A practice of producing professional office-made versions of the art of any century which passed as the art itself was at full blast when the much-hated, much-revered Society of the Protection of Ancient Buildings was founded by Morris, Webb and Faulkner.¹²⁷

So wrote Lethaby in 1925, about the birth of the SPAB. As to Lethaby's involvement in organizations concerned with preservation matters, his participation in the SPAB is the most important. He eventually assumed the role of intellectual leader of the body's governing Committee, succeeding Morris and Webb.

A few facts about the Society's early history (before Lethaby became a member) may be usefully noted here to enable a better appreciation of Lethaby's involvement. Ruskin had had the idea of forming a society to protect old buildings from "restorers" as early as 1845 when he complained in a letter to his father about restoration work going on at Pisa. From the following years in Ruskin's books The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) and The Stones of Venice (1851) there is also material to support his views on the value of past work and how it was being cared for at the time.¹²⁸ By January 1855, Ruskin had

¹²⁶"Modern Church Building," Feb. 6, 1931, p. 284. Several lines Lethaby uses effectively here, as on a number of other occasions, are a kind of anthropomorphic literary device.

¹²⁷Originally 1925; as from the 1935 book version, p. 146). Quiney, in J. L. Pearson (1979) wrote that the SPAB "challenged the whole philosophy of restoration and attacked individual works with as much spirit as The Ecclesiologist had vented on new churches thirty years before." (*op.cit.*, p. 185).

¹²⁸Information from D.S. Martin's Thesis, "The Architecture of W.R. Lethaby" (1957) University of Manchester, pp. 37-38. See also the footnote in Philip Webb, *op. cit.*, p. 143. It is not clear whether this is Ward's (the editor's) or Lethaby's footnote.

suggested to the President of the Society of Antiquaries that a committee be formed. The thought of forming a society that “opposed the thoughtless destruction of our antiquities,” as Lethaby put it in 1925 had also occurred to Morris in 1876 and such a society was indeed formed (the SPAB) the following year by Webb, Morris, Faulkner, the writer Thomas Carlyle and the painters William Holman-Hunt and Edward Burne-Jones.¹²⁹ Quiney, in his biography of J.L. Pearson, connected with the SPAB’S founding Morris’ proposal for an association to protect Tewkesbury Abbey (threatened in 1877 by Gilbert Scott’s proposed restoration) and other “ancient” buildings from destruction. Morris’ proposal was published in The Athenaeum, March 10, 1877 and Quiney noted that within a month the SPAB was formed.¹³⁰

A dozen years later (1889 or 1890) Ernest Gimson joined the Society and it is he who introduced Lethaby to it in 1891.¹³¹ By 1893 Lethaby had joined Webb and Morris on the Society’s governing committee.¹³² Lethaby soon became an influential member but in his address to the SPAB Meeting of 1930, Lethaby acknowledged the Society’s influence on him.¹³³ Philip Webb was particularly important in this regard. John Brandon-Jones, reporting the importance of Webb to the society, stated that Webb’s “experience and practical knowledge of building made it certain that the recommendations of the Society

¹²⁹“Philip Webb...” (1925), as found in 1935 book version, p. 146. It is interesting that Ruskin was not among the founders and that it was composed mainly of Morris’ close circle.

¹³⁰Op. cit., p. 185. Quiney has written that even Scott, “The most inveterate of restorers” attacked “unscrupulous” restoration in his book, A Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches (1859), but Quiney noted here that there were problems in reconciling Scott’s written principles with his practice. (p. 185).

¹³¹Martin, op. cit., in his Chronological Index, p. 130. See also, Scraps and Scraps (1957). A. H. Powell editor. Introduction by Viscount Esher (1852-1930, historian and Liberal politician).

¹³²Martin, op. cit. (see Martin’s Chart) See also, the Forward by Basil Ward to the 1955 edition of Lethaby’s Architecture.

¹³³Reported in The Builder (1930), p. 1142. Webb, Lethaby reported in 1925, always kept the Society informed of any work he was doing on old houses or churches (Philip Webb, repub. in 1935 of Lethaby’s 1925 articles on Webb in The Builder, p. 106. One of Webb’s few assistants, William Weir, also became a specialist in the repair of old buildings).

could never be brushed aside as the wishful thinking of a bunch of amateurs.”¹³⁴ Webb always, Lethaby reported in 1925, kept the Society informed of any work he was doing on old houses and churches.¹³⁵

Webb could not have provided Lethaby with a model for the more gentle diplomacy for which Lethaby was known, however. In a letter to Charles Gaskell of July, 1877 regarding the SPAB, Webb wrote: “Your reference to the Society as ‘somewhat Quixotic’ I take to mean that the generality of people with whom it would have to deal would be as witless as windmills.”¹³⁶ Quixotic the society must have seemed by some with its uncompromising insistence on minimal tampering with old buildings.¹³⁷ Sidney Cockerell, writing to Lethaby in 1896 observed that the SPAB was sometimes misunderstood—that people thought its policy was one of letting buildings fall into ruin.¹³⁸ At least, Cockerell wrote, “restoration” was not as popular as it once was: “The word ‘restoration’ has become unpopular of late. It is so carefully excluded from the reports of architects and the printed appeals for funds that one is tempted to hope that the thing itself may also ere long become unpopular.”¹³⁹

The SPAB and J. L. Pearson

It has been difficult to identify specific preservation actions in which Lethaby was involved through his participation in the SPAB but it is hoped that some discussion of the society’s jousting, during the time of Lethaby’s SPAB involvement, with one of the Society’s major adversaries, (the prominent architect, John L. Pearson (1817-1897), will shed some light on the nature of Lethaby’s activities within the group. Formerly, the architects James Wyatt and G.G. Scott had been for the “anti-scrappers” (as the SPAB came to be known) the major restoration villains of the earlier years of the nineteenth century, but

¹³⁴“After William Morris,” *Artifex*, vol. 4, 1970, p. 53.

¹³⁵Originally 1925;as repub. in the book *Philip Webb* in 1935, p. 106.

¹³⁶*Philip Webb* (1935 edition), p. 113; originally published in *The Builder* in 1925).

¹³⁷The SPAB, Lethaby wrote caustically in 1925, did not offer critiques as to how correctly corrections of “style” had been done but was instead intensely critical of “method.” (*Philip Webb*, 1935 repr. as a book.)

¹³⁸July, 1896 letter, Sydney Carlyle Cockerell—W. R. L. correspondence, British Museum Collection.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

Pearson came to occupy this role in the century's later decades. Pearson's career as a church restorer in particular was greatly aided, Quiney has pointed out in his monograph of the man, by two events: 1) Scott had died, leaving Pearson to succeed to such "restoration" works as would have otherwise been secured by Scott and 2) Pearson was chosen as architect for Truro Cathedral, an accomplishment accompanied by a great deal of publicity.¹⁴⁰ At the time the SPAB was founded, Pearson had already been involved in the restoration of fifty churches. His methods of restoration were much like Wyatt's and Scott's and his aims were unceasingly questioned by the SPAB. Although Pearson did try, Quiney has asserted, to meet the objections of the Society, he soon came to be mistrusted by the group and became, in fact, its prime enemy.¹⁴¹

For a number of years beginning in 1878 the SPAB commented adversely on some restoration or another of Pearson's, and fought him the hardest on the larger religious structures, the cathedrals. Quiney described the nature of a number of conflicts between the SPAB and Pearson in his book on the latter.

Lethaby may have been conversant with the conflict between Pearson on the SPAB over the restoration of Westminster Hall, a conflict which arose before Lethaby joined the Society, through news items and conversations with his colleagues. Pearson's repair of the cloister at Lincoln was criticized by Somers Clarke in The Builder in 1892, when Lethaby was experiencing his first years as a member in the Society.¹⁴²

The SPAB's only major victory over Pearson, Quiney has observed, concerned the fourth side of this, the cloister at Lincoln Cathedral, a side which was substantially destroyed in the fifteenth century and where, in 1644, Christopher Wren had built a library. Plans had been advanced to extend the close and a benefactor of the project had persuaded the Dean and Chapter to remove Wren's library, and rebuild it on part of the new open space to be created. Pearson said that in the process of this he could also

¹⁴⁰Quiney, p. 185.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Clarke had said: "Mr. Pearson has restored the cloister and restored away the intermediate buttresses so that this page of history is carefully removed." (Quiney, p. 194). George Somers Clarke (1841-1926) was an English architect and Egyptologist.

“restore” the fourth side of the cloister to match the others. This proposal was made public in 1892 and the SPAB, with the support of the Society of Antiquaries, protested. The SPAB claimed a “historical fact” would be destroyed in moving the library. This point of view prevailed and the scheme was shelved.¹⁴³ The protest to the SPAB and the Society of Antiquaries provided an example from the nineteenth century of the now prevalent preservation goal of leaving a work, wherever possible, in the original place.

The most bitter, futile controversy between Pearson and the SPAB (and the Society of Antiquaries) also occurred during the time Lethaby was a leading figure in the former group. This had to do with Pearson’s work on the west front of Peterborough Cathedral. A stone fell from this façade in 1892, and three years later a gale brought down four pinnacles. The Dean believed the whole thing, known to be in poor repair, to be insecure. William Morris advised trying to preserve the front at all costs but Pearson in 1896 said, after study, that the north gable of the front should be taken down and maybe the central one as well. The same year the Society of Antiquaries, Quiney has related, became over-heated—for example, in accusing the Dean and Chapter of criminal behavior.¹⁴⁴

The SPAB and the Society of Antiquaries could not accept even a stalemate on the problem because, they believed, action on the building fabric was necessary. A specification for how they would repair the front was drawn up, sponsored by the two groups, including an offer to repair the north gable free of charge! More time was asked for and the opportunity to develop this preservation proposal in more detail. Near the end of 1896, however, the Dean and Chapter decided to ignore the proposal put forward by the two societies and authorized Pearson to proceed with the restoration. Early in January 1897, Pearson began work but the SPAB and Society of Antiquaries protested further. They published their specifications and the story of their actions since the controversy had started.

Other entities became involved in the controversy as well. Commentary sympathetic to Pearson and the church officials ran in 1896 in The Builder:

¹⁴³Peter Ferriday, in “The Church Restorer,” Architectural Review, 1964, described Pearson’s proposal to move Wren’s library as a “really wicked scheme” (as related in Quiney, p. 198).

¹⁴⁴Quiney, p. 196.

We should be guilty of the most culpable neglect of duty were we to allow any hazardous experiments [as the Societies' proposals were termed] to be made on so important an example of Early English architecture as the west front of the Cathedral, of which we are the duly-appointed guardians and for the safety and reservation of which we alone, are responsible.¹⁴⁵

The Builder said that the protesters were youthful and inexperienced.¹⁴⁶ The group was, however, far from that. For example, Webb, Macartney, Newton, Stevenson, Ricardo, Mickelthwaite, and Prior, all signers, were architects in their forties, fifties, and sixties. Lethaby also was about forty.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, although the Council of the RIBA refused to endorse a letter of support for Pearson, nearly all the members of the Council signed one.¹⁴⁸ "Pearson who felt acutely the attacks on him," Quiney has noted, carried out his work "in the face of a storm of archeological bigotry and intolerance."¹⁴⁹

The Antiquarians' appraisal in 1898 of Pearson's preservation work would certainly be compatible with Lethaby's view. The Antiquary that year had observed that Pearson was a product of "the old school of ecclesiastical 'restorers' who considered that if you pulled down an old building and erected a copy of it you are preserving the old work. Mr. Pearson seemed unable to shake off this...destructive conception of what true restoration means."¹⁵⁰ Quiney objected that this characterization was not true of Pearson's work at Peterborough—even less of what he actually did than of his proposal. He may have been

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 196.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 237, f.n. 40. A civil engineer and also a protest signer, John Caruthers, was also a professor. Some other signers were Wollaston Franks (President of the Society of Antiquaries), Charles Read (that society's Secretary), Thackeray Turner (Secretary of the SPAB), Detmar Blow, F.W. Troup, P. Morley Horder, H. Wilson, E. Guy Dawber and C.R. Ashbee. Many of the signers are notable figures of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 237, f.n. 42. Published in The Building News in 1897, these letters also included ones (in support of Pearson) from such prominent architects as J. W. Brydon, Aston Webb, Alfred Gotch, and Ernest George.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 197. Quiney does not give the source of this second part of quote. Quiney himself (Ibid., p. 195) questioned whether the SPAB/S. of A. plan would work. A partially conciliatory letter from Prior and Mickelthwaite was later sent to Pearson saying that they did not consider the disagreements to be of a personal nature but that they still felt (loosing one further blast) that Pearson's work on the project was "only for those who preferred a smart new copy to a genuine work of art." (Ibid.).

¹⁵⁰As quoted in Quiney, p. 198.

misguided but not malevolent, Quiney would like his readers to believe, but The Athenaeum's verdict (December 18, 1897) was that "No building was safe in his [Pearson's] hands."¹⁵¹ A few years earlier, Somers Clarke, in some correspondence published in The Builder in 1892 said he wished Pearson had been more anxious to preserve and repair rather than to restore and "build up sham antiquities making our churches the cold, lifeless, unhistorical edifices most of them have become."¹⁵² Quiney's evaluation of Pearson's experiences as a "restorer," which seems to be aligned with those of the protestors of Pearson's work, are worth noting: "The tragedy was that Pearson could not be trusted. Although he had always been capable of sensitive repairs even when drastic work was required, he was condemned for wanting to improve on history for the sake of architectural propriety."¹⁵³

The Campaign to Save the Foundling Hospital

Lethaby's interest in saving the Foundling Hospital in Bloomsbury should also be noted in discussing his preservation activities. In 1926, Lethaby provided the Introduction for the pamphlet, The Foundling Hospital and Its Neighborhood, in which were strong appeals for saving the hospital and environs.¹⁵⁴ Lethaby called attention, in his introduction, to the Hospital's value to London, especially as it related to and formed a nodal point of its neighborhood:

...now the Foundling Hospital, one of the most worthily housed Institutions in London, is in danger of being delivered over to the powers of desolation and destruction.

[It] is part and centre of the largest area of considered planning in the whole extent of London. On its destruction will follow the degradation of a district far larger than its own area, which, however, is considerable...

...we must ask how far, in a great and ancient city, may these ancient amenities and civilities be sacrificed by some group of persons regardless of the larger and truer interests of the community? It should be clearly seen that the preservation or demolition of such a large historical part of the West Central District is not only a question concerning the Hospital

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁵²As found in Quiney, p. 194.

¹⁵³Quiney, p. 197.

¹⁵⁴Published by the Foundling Estate Protection Association (1926).

itself, but the whole neighborhood of pleasant Squares and terraces is quite tragically involved. If, for instance, as has been suggested, a vegetable market were brought here, the neighborhood might soon decline into slumdom. The Hospital and its grounds form an island of ordered peace that sweetens a wide area, and is as a whole an example of the town-planning we hear so much talk of, but see so little with our eyes. Its preservation is important, not only for Bloomsbury, but for London and England.¹⁵⁵

Lethaby confided his concern about the hospital also in a letter (c. 1926) to Harry Peach in which he noted that it and the surrounding Bloomsbury squares were threatened.¹⁵⁶ A few years earlier he had also written to Peach about the hospital, asking Peach to contact the prominent Labour Party politician Ramsey MacDonald about intervening in the proposed destruction of the building. Capitalism was seen by Lethaby as a malevolent factor in the problem and he stressed the importance of the Labour Party being on the side of preservation:

It is an important civilization question, that every pious or social foundation shall not be sacrificed in this last-leg age of capitalism. Also, it is essential that the Labour party show themselves as ever the statesmen with a view of culture. The old building is most beautiful, ancient, typical of England, peoples' endowment, everything, and they want to omit it. Would tear it down with their nails.¹⁵⁷

There was, indeed, the threat of converting the Foundling Hospital Estate to a market area—to be moved from Covent Garden.¹⁵⁸ Lethaby argued that if conversion (adaptive re-use) of the hospital was necessary, utilization by the nearby University of London would be preferred.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵The Foundling Hospital and Its Neighborhood, Introduction, p. 12.

¹⁵⁶At the RIBA Drawings Collection.

¹⁵⁷February 11, 1923, RIBA Drawings Collection. Two days later Peach wrote to Lethaby that he was writing MacDonald about it that day. MacDonald was Prime Minister in 1924 and again in 1929-31 and 1931-35. Stanley Baldwin was Prime Minister when Lethaby wrote his letter.

¹⁵⁸See Lethaby's views in The Observer, December 12, 1926, in the piece "Save Bloomsbury—A Tour of the Threatened Area" (sub-titled "The Market or the Square" and "Dirt or Dignity"). In early 1975 the Covent Garden Market was closed down once and for all, its functions relocated to a new facility south of the Thames.

¹⁵⁹The Foundling Hospital..., p. 13. "They would be perfectly suitable for some administration, institutional, or educational purpose," he wrote.

In additional arguments in favor of the Hospital's preservation, Lethaby appealed to intangible considerations—was this interest in dismantling the hospital an appropriate action for a civilized society which revered the past?:

There is a still more serious consideration than even the guarding of beauty. This is the reverence for ancestral pieties which is necessarily felt by all truly civilized peoples, and it must be said that I, for one, am frightened by our easy and greedy destruction of inheritances and even sacred trusts from our ancestors.¹⁶⁰

Look at the value of what was there, Lethaby wrote—the buildings so difficult to replace and the trees:

The Buildings [of the Foundling Hospital] are a kind we can make no longer; they were stoutly wrought, according to custom and are sound, unaggressive and dignified. Of such works in this advertising age we have lost the secret... The well-grown trees which surround the buildings and give a park-like aspect to the place, should quite melt our city hearts by their graceful beauty.¹⁶¹

Lethaby closed his arguments with a powerful appeal:

When these trees have been cut down and burnt, when the pleasant old buildings have been torn into rubbish and carted away, when the pieties and poetries have been exorcised, and the site has been partitioned up and built over to yield what is called profit—what will it profit? Is it not obvious that London and England will be the poorer?

Can nothing be done to stop the grinding machine? Our destruction of such a place will be a writing on the walls of our civilization.¹⁶²

Professional Work—Surveyorship of Westminster Abbey

In 1906, Lethaby gained the opportunity to put his preservation theories to the practical test on a very large scale. Following in the footsteps of Christopher Wren, Nicholas Hawksmoor, James Wyatt, G. G. Scott, J. L. Pearson and others, Lethaby was appointed Surveyor to Westminster Abbey, a post he held

¹⁶⁰Ibid., Introduction, p. 12.

¹⁶¹Ibid., Introduction, p. 13.

¹⁶²Ibid.

until 1928.¹⁶³ That same year he published, on the subject of this esteemed edifice, one of his most important books, Westminster Abbey and the Kings' Craftsmen.

The following paragraphs will center on what Lethaby said then about the work undertaken by previous Surveyors to the Abbey, the current state of the fabric, and what he thought should be done as to safeguarding the Abbey fabric. Although Lethaby commented on the Abbey in other places as well, his 1906 book on the subject, in addition to its considerable value as a history of the building, offers the most revealing commentary concerning preservation issues pertaining to the Abbey. One might turn first to this book for some of Lethaby's preservation-related comments about the Abbey. Included are a number of indictments about the practice of "restoration" in general, an affliction from which he certainly felt that the Abbey had suffered. One such is this:

Without being a student of records it is impossible to tell what is even an echo of the ancient work. The expert re-editing of old buildings, with all its pretensions of science, comes in practice to muddling up of so much copying of old work, so much conjecture, and so much more caprice, without leaving any record as to which is which. This actual obliteration of authentic remnants and evidence is what we call Restoration.¹⁶⁴

Lethaby's method of preservation is elucidated in a number of passages in his 1906 book on Westminster Abbey. He articulated his belief in minimal disturbance of the fabric, for instance:

How different it would have been with Abbey church if, instead of all the learned and ignorant experiments to which it has been subjected, this ever fresh energy in pulling down and setting up, there had been steadily carried on during the last century a system of careful patching, staying, and repair. Even yet, if we could arrest attempts at improvements—as if the church were not good enough for us—of which the results are creeping over the whole building in a sort of deadly disease, and substitute more daily carefulness, much of the authentic part might be handed on for other ages.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³He had been offered the post by Dean Armitage Robinson.

¹⁶⁴Westminster Abbey..., pp. 63-64. On a more specific preservation issue (in reference to some work of the painters of the Westminster School—possibly Herrebrecht of Cologne) Lethaby offered this critical comment, which is a companion to the complaints he made about architectural restoration: "It was painted on a patterned background of raised gild gesso-work which unfortunately was restored away when the picture was cleaned by experts." (Ibid., p. 279).

¹⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 91-92.

Keep the Abbey clean and otherwise refrain from touching it was Morris' advice, Lethaby said.

This and the perceived need for a protective covering are brought out in another passage:

As Mr. Morris says in his little volume on the care of the church: 'You cannot restore it, you can preserve it. The structural stability having been secured, the Abbey should be kept clean, and otherwise not touched at all.' This keeping clean would be one factor in preservation, for this film of matter which collects over all surfaces in London is very destructive. I must here repeat what I have said as to the necessity of putting a protective skin of lime-wash over the whole exterior stone-work. Examination of ancient masonry like the west front and sculptures of Wells Cathedral, and the rich south porch of Lincoln, shows that in the Middle Ages it was customary so to protect masonry. Of course, if the church were whitened all at once it would seem somewhat shocking, but there is no need of this, if it were done gradually with a yellow toned wash; and the portions done would soon recover their mellowness. The various textures would appear through the film with even enhanced value...¹⁶⁶

Commenting about the cloister in particular, at Westminster Abbey, Lethaby urged the application of protective coatings for the stonework: "The vaulted side walls are most terribly decayed, but the experiments made of the preservation effects of whitewash in the vaulted passages which lead out of Dean's Yard show that this leprosy might still be cleaned by such simple means, were it not that we always prefer to do some great thing in 'restoration'."¹⁶⁷ In his later book on the Abbey (1913), Paul Biver described the effects of London's climate on the Abbey's masonry, mentioning that a number of types of protective coatings had been tried unsuccessfully. The latest, however, involving the whitewashing (administered under Lethaby's direction) seemed to be the answer:

Le climat de Londres rend très difficile cette tâche de conservation, car la pierre s'y désagrège avec une rapidité extrême, si elle n'est pas, comme dans la plupart des édifices civils, revêtue d'une couche de peinture protectrice. Dans certains passages voûtés de l'abbaye, nous ignorerions la présence ancienne de doubleaux et de liernes, disparus par suite de l'humidité, sans les longues lames de plomb pendantes, qui servirent jadis à en réunir les claveaux maintenant disparus. Même dans les parties closes, les pierres calcaires, aussi bien que le marbre, se délitent sous l'action des vapeurs sulfuriques : seul, l'albâtre d'une texture cependant si friable, doit à sa constitution chimique de demeurer sans altération. Plusieurs vernis, destinés à protéger la pierre, on été essayés sans donner satisfaction;

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 377.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 40-42. Here, whitewash seems to be advanced as a cleaning method as well as a protective measure.

maintenant on use, pour l'extérieur, de badigeons de lait de chaux teinté reprenant avec succès un procédé fort ancien.¹⁶⁸

In his book on the Abbey, Lethaby recognized that the recording of objects must be a part of the Abbey's program, for it was not possible to preserve everything, even with the most careful techniques:

Whatever we do, much will necessarily decay—paintings, carvings, pavements, are quickly fading and wearing away from sight and memory: and a part of any general scheme of preservation must include the recording of all these things, beginning with those that are likely to be most fugitive, the last traces of painting especially...¹⁶⁹

In this book also, Lethaby discussed what had happened to the Abbey in the course of numerous nineteenth century "restoration" operations. Of the work done in the nineteenth century on the Henry VII Chapel, done under the Surveyorships of the Wyatts, he wrote: "The exterior of our chapel was entirely renewed in the early part of last century, so that, in fact, it is now only a full-sized copy of itself."¹⁷⁰

Lethaby continued:

In the restoration of 1807-1822 the whole exterior was renewed by Thomas Gayfer, the Abbey mason, acting under Wyatt, the most famous restoring-away architect of his time. In a series of articles in The Gentleman's Magazine, John Carter chronicled the usual stupidities of such work. The old surface was entirely chopped away and replaced by a copy of that which could not be copied. Before this time it had been terribly let down, as may be seen in Carter's description of its state, but more by neglect than decay.¹⁷¹

Lethaby provided in his book an account of how much of the north transept came to be destroyed without necessity during this period:

A full account of the proceeding which led up to this undertaking is given by Cottingham. Gayfer, the mason was examined and asked: "Is the masonry so totally decayed externally that the whole must have a new ashlar?" "Certainly not," he replied, "as many parts of the present work, particularly on the north side, are nearly perfect [but]...the flying buttresses are

¹⁶⁸L'Église Abbatiale..., Paul Biver, (1913), p. 28.

¹⁶⁹Westminster Abbey... (1906), p. 372.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 277. James Wyatt served as Surveyor from 1776-1813 and Benjamin Dean Wyatt from 1813-1827.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

all very much decayed, as are all the domes of the turrets, which work must come down low as the canopies at least.” The House of Commons Committee then ordered that it should be restored to a substantial state, but without removing the parts which were not decayed, and without re-working any of the old surfaces, which were to be retained. The Dean, however, gave the order to proceed, unless stopped by an injunction, “as originally intended.” Later there was another inquiry as to why the directions of the House of Commons had not been carried into effect, but it was too late. The “unwise procedure,” says Neale, “was fortunately counteracted by the firmness of the Dean.” The result was, as William Morris put it, “Mr. Wyatt [it isn’t clear which one] managed to take all the romance out of the exterior of this most romantic work of the late Middle Ages.”¹⁷²

Later in the nineteenth century, C.G. Scott had served as Surveyor and Lethaby, in his series, “A National Architecture” (1918) described this architect’s effect on Westminster’s Chapter House:

The Chapter House at Westminster was constructed as a wonderful umbrella of stone maintained by eight strong iron bars, from the centre to the angles; visible and taut as the cordage of a ship. Sir G. G. Scott’s good taste could not tolerate this when he re-erected the vault so by an expedient, followed also at the wonderful Albert Memorial, a concealed structure was devised in the roof and the vault was hung from this.¹⁷³

Nearing the end of the nineteenth century, Pearson, as then Surveyor to the Abbey, made his contribution to the destruction to the fabric, in Lethaby’s view. Before dealing with Lethaby’s specific evaluation of this work, some general description of Pearson’s undertakings there may be useful. It should be noted that Pearson inherited from Scott (and Scott from the Wyatts) the unfinished project to rebuild the façade of the north transept. Pearson’s pursuit of this, Quiney has written, earned him “...the undying enmity of the SPAB, becoming in their eyes the greatest destroyer of all.”¹⁷⁴ During the nineteenth century, according to Morris, Wyatt, Blore (who was Surveyor from 1829-1899 between the later Wyatt

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 228.

¹⁷³Part VI: “Walls, Arches and Vaults,” *The Builder*, November 8, 1918, p. 229. In contrast to Lethaby, Quiney, commenting on Scott, has said that the latter had studied the Abbey thoroughly and had found it “hard to support the SPAB in condemning his [Scott’s] restoration of the Chapter House to a fair representation of the original.” (p. 191).

¹⁷⁴Quiney, p. 191.

and Scott) and then Scott performed at the Abbey “well meant, ill-conceived, and disastrous pieces of repair of various degrees of stupidity.”¹⁷⁵

Quiney has offered the opinion that the north transept could have served as it stood but related that Scott, in his time as Surveyor, persuaded the Dean and Chapter that restoring it to its medieval appearance would enhance the Abbey. As a result, Scott took down the existing porches, left to be reconstructed by Scott’s son, John Oldrid Scott. Pearson, in his time, continued work on the transepts. Morris criticized all this in his 1893 pamphlet: “The result is most unsatisfactory. It is...another example of the dead-alive office work of the modern restoring architect, over-flowing with surface knowledge of the medieval in every detail but devoid of historic sympathy and true historical knowledge.”¹⁷⁶ The SPAB also condemned in its 1890 Annual Report some of Pearson’s work on the Abbey’s north transept (the new tracery) and complained of “specious archeological ‘corrections’ requiring old glass to be ‘cut up and mangled after a most strange and barbarous fashion’.”¹⁷⁷ Lethaby a few years later maintained that the old rose window in the Abbey had had large foiled circles in the upper spandrels to light the roof above the vaulting; now he said, they were “blank, blind and foolish.”¹⁷⁸

Pearson in his work on the Abbey as in other instances was not without influential support. Although The Builder in 1890 called Scott’s work on the north transept rose window “an incredible piece of bungling” two years later, Pearson’s work on the transept overall was described as “an exceptionally fine example of what must be called restoration...completely in the true spirit and feeling of Medieval architecture.”¹⁷⁹ The Building News (1891) agreed: “He [Pearson] has inspired his work with an interest and a living character which contributes in no small degree to the unqualified success of the whole

¹⁷⁵From Morris’ pamphlet Concerning Westminster Abbey (1893), as quoted in Quiney, p. 191.

¹⁷⁶As quoted in Quiney, op.cit., p. 192.

¹⁷⁷Quiney, p. 193. Lethaby was probably a member of the SPAB by the time the report was written.

¹⁷⁸Ibid. Quiney quoting from Lethaby’s Westminster Abbey (1906). More completely, Lethaby had written: “In the old work, the large foiled arches were pierced to form lights to the roof; in the ‘scientific’ restoration they are blank, blind and foolish. ...They ought, one would think, to know old forms when they see them” (op.cit., p. 76).

¹⁷⁹As quoted in Quiney, p 193.

thing.”¹⁸⁰ Also, Maurice Adams, in Architects from George IV to George V (1912) “poured scorn” on the SPAB and the like. Adams called the transept a beautiful design and continued, sarcastically: “It is difficult to understand the cult of the anti-repairist...”¹⁸¹

In 1906, Lethaby wrote of the altered state of the Abbey, especially the north transept, in the hands of his predecessors:

The exterior of the church has been subjected to such a series of injuries and ‘improvements’ that hardly one old stone of it remains upon another. The original form of the once so beautiful North Transept, with its three great portals, had to a large extent disappeared under a layer of alterations even before the great restoration (1875-1890) which made all false.¹⁸²

Regarding this “great restoration,” Lethaby commented: “...when the close hoarding [begun in 1884], which I will remember shut out any view of what was being done, was taken away about 1892, it was clear that the whole transept had been completely ‘beautified.’ Restoration schemes are now conducted so far as possible in secret, on the principle that dead buildings tell no tales.”¹⁸³ Quiney seems to have concurred that Pearson’s work on the north transept overall, was infelicitous:

Pearson may be excused for completing Scott’s scheme, for completing what the Dean and Chapter were resolved to complete, for making a real and scholarly attempt to reproduce the original design. He may be excused for paying scanty regard, as all previous generations of architects had done, to an earlier but recent building; that he did it more drastically than had been done before was only a matter of degree. To the SPAB they were just excuses and entirely unacceptable. Morris described Hawksmoor’s west tower as “a monument of the incapacity of the seventeenth and eighteenth century architects to understand the work of their forefathers.” Pearson’s north transept façade is that and more; not only did he ignore all the past but the thirteenth century, but he destroyed that as well. There lies his reputation.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰As quoted in Quiney. Ibid.

¹⁸¹Quiney, p. 193, quoting from Adams, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁸²Westminster Abbey..., pp 63-64. In another comment Lethaby stated that “...it is worth some trouble to gather up the evidence as to...[the] original form before...[it was]...made over in the ‘Early English’ of today.” (pp. 63-64).

¹⁸³Ibid., pp. 64-65.

¹⁸⁴Quiney, p. 193.

Quiney does point out that, as Surveyor, Pearson did also execute “simple repairs” (less sweeping?) to the Abbey but that these are forgotten. He cited, for instance, Pearson’s replacing of decayed stonework on the south side of the choir and his repairing of the clerestory walls and buttressing at the east end (including the flying buttress and the shafts supporting them). Some of this, Quiney has commented, was done to eighteenth century portions which were allowed to remain with no attempt to restore to “original” conditions.¹⁸⁵

Pearson has been called, Quiney has observed, the last of the restorers, his successor, the first of the repairers.¹⁸⁶ This latter reference is to J. T. Mickelthwaite, Lethaby’s immediate predecessor and Surveyor from 1897-1906, who was apparently of like mind to Lethaby on preservation methodology.¹⁸⁷ It was really Lethaby though who changed the direction of architectural work as Biver acknowledged in his 1913 book on the Abbey. This is shown in Biver’s description of the later nineteenth century restoration developments at the Abbey:

De 1882 à 1892, la façade nord est entièrement reconstruite : dans l’ignorance de son aspect primitif, mieux eût valu copier l’œuvre de Wren (XVII^e siècle), qui ne manquait ni de style ni surtout de sobriété. Ce travail fut exécuté sur de plans tout nouveaux, avec embellissements.

De 1898 à 1902, les restaurations visent la façade occidentale.

En 1900, la rose meridionale est refaite pour la troisième fois, et décorée de verrières neuves.

Enfin, les dernières réfections dirigées par l’architecte actuel, le Professeur Lethaby, concernent les tours et la nef, à l’est du transept nord. Sous cette direction est heureusement appliquée, une méthode toute nouvelle, destinée à donner les meilleurs résultats on substitue simplement aux éléments d’architecture dégradés des copies scrupuleusement identiques, qu’ils datent du XIII^e ou du XIV^e siècle. L’architecte s’abstient de restaurer, s’il s’agit d’une fresque qui s’efface ou d’une figure sculptée qui s’effrite.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵Ibid. Ferriday in “The Church Restorers” (*op. cit.*) described the recasing of the Abbey’s north transept as absurd. (Quiney, p. 198).

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷At an earlier point in this chapter Mickelthwaite was noted as a signatory to one of the SPAB’s protests against Pearson.

¹⁸⁸Biver, p. 28.

The Builder, upon the occasion of Lethaby's retirement as Surveyor, also recognized the change of direction Lethaby had effected in preservation and his contributions at the Abbey:

Entering on his duties at the Abbey when there had been so much ruthless destruction of traditional craftsmanship in this country, his care and wise conservancy of it in the Abbey—almost re-discovery of some of it—marks his period of office as one specially distinguished. Moreover, it has set us an example of the wisdom of repair and conservation over the so-called restoration. Restoration, as a rule, restores nothing. It destroys far more than it restores, and the advantage, as in the case of the Abbey monuments, of appreciative cleaning, and repair, is to be seen in the re-appearance—quite another thing to restoration—of many of them, so that today we see work almost as it was originally executed. When we recall the different methods of the Victorian period here, or the depredations of Viollet-le-Duc in France, we realize the value of Professor Lethaby's conservative example, which has been really national service to the cause of art.¹⁸⁹

Preservation Considerations in Lethaby's Private Commissions

In private practice it appears that Lethaby did not take on any major work that focused primarily on preservation. Preservation issues did emerge in two of his commissions however. One concerns his work on the Island of Hoy in the Orkneys. His major effort there, Melsetter House, for Thomas Middlemore, involved adding substantially to the existing fabric and Lethaby undertook other work about the same time (c. 1898-1900) for Middlemore on Hoy.¹⁹⁰ This additional work on Hoy included the remodeling of and adding to Rysa Lodge (a hunting Lodge) about mid-way along the length of the island. John Brandon-Jones' measured drawings of this structure show that Lethaby's addition to the lodge followed Lethaby's general convictions about dealing with old buildings. The new work is very sympathetic to the old, and does not attempt to dominate it through form, colors or materials. There is some departure in the

¹⁸⁹“Professor Lethaby's Retirement,” The Builder, Dec. 16, 1927, p. 827. One might be reminded that Lethaby served a number of years as Surveyor of Rochester Cathedral (1920-1927) as well—some of that time concurrent with his tenure at Westminster Abbey. One may assume that he brought the same skills and practices to bear in his work at Rochester as at Westminster Abbey although it has not been possible for this author to learn of his specific activities at Rochester.

¹⁹⁰Melsetter House itself, became a preservation concern later. See The Times, October 31, 1979, “An Orkney Mansion, Threat to Melsetter House.” “Four Oaks,” Birmingham is Lethaby's only work to have suffered destruction thus far).

change from the original smooth-sloped gable end walls to a stepped (“crow-foot”) gable (a traditional Scottish form) but this would attract no appreciable or undue attention.¹⁹¹

As to Lethaby’s church at Brockhampton, another preservation issue existed. Here the construction of Lethaby’s church as a completely new entity was dependent on the decision to destroy the existing parish church, located there for quite some time, to make room for Lethaby’s larger, new one. An article in the local paper, The Ross Gazette acknowledged the problem of deciding whether to do away with the old church:

It must be some defect of vital importance that would induce a parish to do away with its old parish church—the legacy of their ancestors, around which has centered the history of the parish for probably hundreds of years. But in the course of time...some churches fall into decay and become in other ways unsuited to the requirements of a prosperous parish. Such has been the case in Brockhampton.¹⁹²

Lethaby’s private correspondence relating to his work on the church, however, does not seem to reflect any agonizing over whether to try to save the older structure although it may be that the decision was made prior to Lethaby’s involvement in the project and Lethaby thought, either that the decision was irrevocable or that it clearly was the thing to do.

Points of Lethaby’s Theory—Lethaby Versus the Futurists

The first decade of the twentieth century was an interesting time for Lethaby not only because of the work he did in private practice but also because of his efforts to argue his case (as he did in his book on Westminster Abbey) for “complete” preservation (minimal interference). It was at this time that avant-garde groups such as Italy’s Futurists began propagating their own ideas about what should be done with the architecture of the past. No two viewpoints on the subject as those of Lethaby and the Futurists could be more opposed. Consequently, some comments about the Futurist viewpoint will be included here for

¹⁹¹Observations made on the basis of examining copies of John Brandon-Jones’ drawings as seen at the Royal Commission to Ancient Monuments for Scotland, Edinburgh and the author’s visit to the site, October, 1974.

¹⁹²“A New Parish Church for Brockhampton,” The Ross Gazette, June 27, 1901, p. 4.

contrast. For the Futurist progress had to entail the ruthless rejection of the past (including any uses to which the surviving edifices were being put in the present) and the destruction of all the monuments. The first Futurist Manifesto (1909), authored largely by the leader Filippo Tomasso Marinetti (1876-1944), contained these words about the past:

We stand on the last promontory of the centuries...why should we look back...

We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of any kind.

Come on! Set fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums!...Take up your pick axes, axes and hammers, and wreck, wreck the venerable cities pitilessly.¹⁹³

Actually, the Futurist program called not only for the destruction of reminders of the past but also for the destruction of civilization as it then existed. Marinetti came to London to shout his message, even as Lethaby worked at preservation as Surveyor at Westminster Abbey. The English were told, in a Futurist speech in London in 1910, that an appreciation of the past held them back: “To a degree you are the victims of your traditionalism and its medieval trappings. In spite of everything, a whiff of archives and a rattling of chains survive and hinder your precise, free and easy forward march.”¹⁹⁴ Also, in Marinetti’s speech the audience was told that their attitude towards the resources from Italy’s past were wrong as well: “The compliments you are about to pay could only sadden me, because what you love in our dear peninsula is exactly the object of all our hatreds. Indeed, you criss-cross Italy only to meticulously sniff out the traces of our oppressive past...”¹⁹⁵ Antonio Sant’Elia, the architect of most consequence associated with the Futurists usually expressed himself in less strident tones. Among the eight points he offered in his Mesaggio accompanying his drawings for a Citta Nuovo in 1914 was one dealing with the architecture of the past. But he did assert that he opposed and despised “the embalming

¹⁹³Translation of the Manifesto as it had appeared in French (Paris’ Le Figaro, 1909). Quotations and other information for this footnote and for the remaining footnotes of this paragraph are from Tomasso Marinetti—Selected Writings, 1972, R.W. Flint, ed. and transl. (Also Introduction by Flint.)

¹⁹⁴Given at the Lyceum Club in London.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

[preservation], reconstruction, and reproduction of monuments and ancient palaces.”¹⁹⁶ Popularly associated with Sant’Elia is a passage from the Futurist Manifesto stressing the desirability of impermanence in architecture—just the opposite point of view from Lethaby: “That from an architecture so concerned [that is Futurist] no stock answers could arise, because the fundamental character of Futurist architecture will be expendability and transience. Our houses will last less time than we do, and every generation will have to make its own.”¹⁹⁷

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter has first been discussed Lethaby’s criticisms of the preservation methods of the “restorers”—both domestic and foreign. Next, writings which elucidated his views on preservation were mentioned, as were the preservation-related organizations in which Lethaby participated. The main sources of influence on Lethaby’s theory of preservation—Ruskin, Morris, Webb, and the SPAB, in particular, were brought up next, followed by some discussion of aspects of his theory such as his belief in minimal repair, the need for public awareness, the role of various organizations and professions in the furtherance of preservation, the need to preserve vernacular architecture, the need to record what could not be saved, his interest in preserving craft methodology as well as the actual objects, the need for protective coatings for stonework, and other points. Lethaby’s activities as a preservationist were then addressed, focusing on the SPAB and on Lethaby’s involvement as Surveyor to Westminster Abbey, in order to see more clearly the nature of the implementation of his theory. Last, a comparison was offered of Lethaby’s views with a contemporary group with a strong anti-preservation bias.

¹⁹⁶Ibid. The exhibit was in Milan. The last three words of the quote were added either by the Futurist leader Marinetti and/or by Cinti. The English translation is taken from Ulrich Conrads’ Programs and Manifestoes on Twentieth Century Architecture, 1964 (first English language edition 1970), p. 36. Reyner Banham, in discussing Sant’ Elia’s “Points” in Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, offered the milder “I conclude in disfavor of” in place of the words “I oppose and despise.” (Original edition 1960, second edition 1964; this from the fourth printing, 1975, p. 129.)

¹⁹⁷Banham, op.cit., p. 135. Banham has argued, however, that this point of view is more the product of Marinetti, than Sant’ Elia.

Lethaby's contributions to architectural preservation seem to have been realized principally in the following two ways: First through greater dissemination and implementation (especially through his work at Westminster Abbey) of the "minimal repair" method of preservation developed by Morris and Webb and further refined by Lethaby and second, through the heightening of public awareness of preservation issues and of the "minimal repair" approach to these, through a wide variety of fora. Consistently, over a long period, Lethaby was in a position to influence public opinion. He played a significant role in changing the way many in England, and those in other western countries looked at preservation. Today, his method would strike many as too narrow—not pragmatic enough to save a wide variety of structures which are endangered in today's changing conditions but which cannot be feasibly be retained in pristine condition. In some quarters, the SPAB for example, Lethaby's method lives on, relatively undiluted. The American preservation organization, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities seems to subscribe to a preservation methodology close to Lethaby's.

Opinions from a few other sources, gauging Lethaby's worth in the field of preservation can be offered. Even while Lethaby worked as Surveyor at Westminster Abbey, his contributions there were being recognized in print. Paul Biver, in 1913 praised Lethaby's work there, contrasting it to that of the earlier "restorers." He called Lethaby's conservation technique a "completely new" method (although it had really been developed earlier by Webb, Morris and the SPAB). Biver praised Lethaby's whitewashing solution to the problem of protecting the Abbey stone against London's corrosive environment.¹⁹⁸ On the occasion of Lethaby's retirement from the Surveyorship, The Builder, as previously noted, called Lethaby's work at the Abbey "an example of the wisdom of repair and conservation over so-called restoration."¹⁹⁹ A few years after Lethaby's death, Jocelyn Perkins, in her book on the Abbey, Westminster Abbey—The Empire's Crown (1937) acknowledged Lethaby's presence at the Abbey as a turning point in the care of the structure: "The story of the fabric from the end of the eighteenth century

¹⁹⁸Biver, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

¹⁹⁹"Professor Lethaby's Retirement" (1927), op.cit., p. 827.

onwards was in the main one of perceptual restoration. A more enlightened policy of conservation, based upon sound scholarship, was however inaugurated by the late Professor Lethaby when he became Surveyor in 1906,...”²⁰⁰ Alfred Powell, writing about Lethaby’s aims generally, said: “his chief desire during the last thirty years of his life was to get us all to look at England and to see her, not as a land to be exploited but as our garden home, and to use it rightly and take proper care of it.”²⁰¹ The Times, in the obituary for Lethaby focused on his contribution to preservation, saying that: “...his work as a practising architect was insignificant compared with his influence as a writer and teacher and advisor upon everything that concerned the preservation of ancient building.”²⁰² Viscount Esher, in 1930, assessed Lethaby’s impact on the SPAB: “In its early struggle for recognition and influence Lethaby became one of its strongest sources of influence and fortitude.”²⁰³ Regarding Lethaby’s role at Westminster Abbey the Viscount acknowledged that Lethaby had changed the methods of restoration there, emphasizing Lethaby’s successful efforts to a) keep the building watertight, b) prevent the rebuilding of the cloister and c) supervise the cleaning of the tombs and paintings.”²⁰⁴ Also, Esher wrote with praise of “the great scheme of systematic cleaning and careful repair [at Westminster Abbey] which Professor Lethaby inaugurated and so long controlled.”²⁰⁵ An account of Lethaby appearing in the Western Morning News

²⁰⁰Perkins, op.cit., p. 55. Perkins was then Sacristan at the Abbey.

²⁰¹Scraps and Scraps (1956), op.cit., Introduction, p. 8.

²⁰²July 18, 1931. Lethaby had died the day before. Another obituary (unlabeled newspaper with no date, in an R.I.B.A. folder on Lethaby) centered, as well, on his preservation work: “During his long years of service he was the constant champion of simple repair of the fabric as against such ‘restoration’ as has done irreparable damage to many of our great cathedrals and churches.” (no page number was available).

²⁰³From the Preface to Scraps and Scraps, op.cit., A.H. Powell, editor, p. 1.

²⁰⁴Ibid., Preface, pp. 1-2. The cleaning of the tombs and painting he credited to Professor Tristram, under Lethaby’s direction.

²⁰⁵Ibid., Preface.

in 1934 described his work at the Abbey as being guided by a commitment to repair in detail, continuing what existed, without any attempt at making details merely ‘sham’ correct.²⁰⁶

Lethaby was a leader in educating architectural professionals and the public in general in how to care for historical structures (as well as an advocate for doing so). The next chapter will discuss Lethaby’s very important role as an educator generally.

²⁰⁶ April 21, 1934, by H.E. Bishop, Librarian of Exeter Cathedral. Lethaby’s contribution to preservation generally was herein acknowledged thusly: “Lethaby’s was a pioneer in a movement which is happily gathering strength and spreading.” (Article title and page na.).

CHAPTER XIII

LETHABY AND ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Of all Lethaby's criticism and advice directed toward how architecture should be in the present and future, perhaps none of it is as "future oriented," as his thoughts on architectural education. In this realm of activity an investment would need to be made in advance, the full effects of which would not be known for some time into the future. Perhaps the future-oriented nature of the subject matter of this chapter makes it a fitting final major increment in this exposition and discussion of Lethaby's theory of architecture. Before proceeding to a detailed discussion of Lethaby's criticism and advice on architectural education (and on art education and education in general) some space will be devoted to a brief overview of Lethaby's overall activities involving education (especially architectural). Such material will facilitate an understanding of Lethaby's theory as it pertains to education. Something of Lethaby's own education and training, both general and architectural will be brought up first. The rest of this prefatory section of the chapter consists of a short discussion of Lethaby's own involvement in training and educating others, and then a brief, overall look at this oeuvre as it relates to education—that is, his publications and talks.

In the presentation of the material which forms the primary focus of this chapter, the following "cornerstones" from the structure of Lethaby's thoughts regarding architectural education will be identified. Among these, on the negative side, are his reservations about the limits of "book-learning" and "scholarship" and, more specifically about architecture, his dissatisfaction with the contemporary methods then being utilized in English architectural education, such as the orientation (influenced by the French) towards the atelier. Also problems, Lethaby thought, were the students' remote view of reality—reinforced by their participation in the solution of improbable design projects and their improper use of the knowledge of past architecture (especially, the preoccupation with the "styles"). The positive cornerstones involve the teaching of the values discussed in the previous chapter—for example, the need for a "scientific" approach, for keeping students in close touch with the "real" world, teaching how to actually construct things and for instilling within them a strong desire to serve society.

Lethaby's Own Education and Training

Lethaby's training and education was more fully discussed in Chapter I. Suffice it to be recalled here a few of the more basic details and of this. His early education centered around the instruction he received at the Barnstaple School of Art in his hometown and the knowledge he gained in working as an articulated architectural apprentice there in the office of Barnstaple architect Alexander Lauder. Lethaby entered in 1873. Lauder set the example of an architect who was interested in and active in related crafts (for example, Lauder's personal involvement in the inclusion of craft elements in his architectural projects and in the renewing of Barnstaple's pottery industry. He also acted as the model for Lethaby for the architect as teacher, for not only did he function as Lethaby's teacher in the conventional milieu of the times—that is, as “master” in the office in which Lethaby was apprenticed—but also as his teacher at the Barnstaple school which he, in fact, was instrumental in founding.¹

Leaving his apprenticeship with Lauder in 1877, Lethaby received more architectural experience, working first, briefly, in the architectural offices of Richard Waite of Derby (actually the suburb, Duffield) and, then, two years later for a longer period in London as an employee of the famous architect Norman Shaw. The rewards as to training and education resulting from his presence in Shaw's office seem to have been in excess of what the typical architectural employee of the times might expect, for Shaw is known to have allowed his workers more chances to work out parts of the design work themselves and Lethaby, who must have enjoyed particularly liberal benefits amongst those in Shaw's office in his position as chief clerk, acknowledged as much in this passage from his 1925 writings on Phillip Webb: “Mr. Shaw was extra-ordinarily generous to his clerks, sometimes letting them ‘design’ minor matters, not because of any gain to him but because he thought it would make their work more

¹ See “The Architecture of W.R. Lethaby,” by David Marin, Bachelor's Thesis, U. of Manchester, 1957, P. 40 and Brian Thomas' contribution to the symposium on Lethaby in 1957 (published in the *R.I.B.A.J.* in April, 1957: “William Richard Lethaby—1857-1931: “Formative Years”, p. 218. Basil Ward tells us (Preface, 1955 ed. of Lethaby's *Architecture*, p.xxii) that while in Barnstaple, Lethaby also took lessons at the Literary and Scientific Institute, where Lauder also taught.

interesting and be a training.”² John Brandon-Jones also observed (1957) the latitude Shaw allowed Lethaby. He noted: “It was not long before Lethaby was given complete control of the jobs on which he was employed.”³ In Shaw’s office, Lethaby made friends with at least one other architect destined to achieve some note as a teacher, E.S. Prior, who became Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Cambridge. Shortly after Lethaby left Shaw’s employ, in 1890, Lethaby began his friendship with Sydney C. Cockerell, who became director of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge [and taught at Oxford? verify].⁴

Not long after entering Shaw’s office, Lethaby, encouraged by his employer, renewed his education at organized institutions by enrolling (in July, 1880) in the Royal Academy of Art.⁵ In the course of his involvement with the Academy, pursued in addition to his regular duties in Shaw’s office, he must have come in contact with such illustrious visitors to the Academy as architects George Street and Alfred Waterhouse. Shaw himself, John Brandon-Jones tells us, was a “conscientious visitor” to the school.⁶ Regular teachers at the Academy, such as the architect Richard Phené Spiers influenced Lethaby as well and he met other architects such as Beresford Pite, Attwood Slater and Reginald Blomfield, who participated later with Lethaby in matters relating to architectural education, especially their mutual involvement in the production of the R.I.B.A.’s first draft for an architectural education syllabus.

² Orig. appearing serially in The Builder in 1925, later printed in book form (1935), p. 75.

³ “William Richard Lethaby—1857-1931,” Part II: “The Architectural World of William Richard Lethaby,” R.I.B.A.J., April, 1957, p. 219. Similarly, Brandon-Jones remarked on the freedom Shaw allowed his workers in the design area to the benefit of their education, in his article from 1970, “After William Morris,” Artifex, Vol. 4, p. 53.

⁴ Cockerell applied for the Directorship of the Fitzwilliam in 1908 and engaged in this position at least in the years 1909-1911. Prior, as Slade Professor was at Cambridge at that time. Lethaby, as previously noted, must have made some stimulating acquaintances as Cockerell’s guest at Cambridge as the latter’s guests also included such luminaries as John Yeats, Bertrand Russell, George Bernard Shaw and Roger Fry, the latter whom he also could have known from mutual involvement in the Art Workers Guild activities.

⁵ Martin (op.cit.) and Brandon-Jones (1957 work, op.cit.) say that he enrolled in 1880. Stephen Bayley has said this was in 1879 (“W.R. Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition,” R.I.B.A.J., April 1975, p. 29). Lethaby was a prize-winner in the Academy (for example, in 1882) as he had been earlier in Barnstaple Art School. (See obituaries for Lethaby in the R.I.B.A.J. by F.W. Troup, 8 Aug., 1931, p. 697, and by Arthur Keen, 19 Sept., 1931, p. 738.

⁶ “After William Morris,” op.cit., p. 53. See also Brandon-Jones’ 1957 contribution (op. cit.) wherein he noted that Shaw was a “loyal supporter” of the Academy and devoted many of his evenings to teaching there (p. 219).

The other principal mode of Lethaby's education came through exposure to William Morris and Phillip Webb via the activities of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which Lethaby joined in 1893.⁷ Morris's influence on Lethaby in this milieu could only have lasted a few years (Morris died in 1896); contact with Webb, both in and out of the SPAB lasted much longer. Lethaby, in his biography of Ernest Gimson, who had introduced him to the Society claimed that this body, especially as it involved the participation of Webb, functioned really as a school of architecture—one which Lethaby held in high regard. In Lethaby's writing on Gimson of 1924:

...the Society was itself a remarkable teaching body. Dealing as it did with the common facts of traditional building in scores and hundreds of examples, it became under the technical guidance of Phillip Webb,...a real school of practical building—architecture with all the whims which we usually call “design” left out. Here we saw that architecture should mean solid realities, not paper promises, names, and dreams.⁸

Lethaby noted the irony of the Society's concern with the old in the context of its role as a relevant, modern school: “It is a curious fact that this Society, engaged in an intense study of antiquity became a school of rational builders and modern building.”⁹ John Brandon-Jones has credited Webb with great influence, through his SPAB “teaching,” on his contemporaries and on his juniors, such as Lethaby. Mentioning also the respect accorded Webb by the Art Workers Guild, Brandon-Jones wrote of him in 1970, describing the workings of the SPAB school:

...in fact he had a tremendous reputation and was held in awe by the Guildsmen. ... He conducted what amounted to a secret school of architecture, disguised as the Committee of the SPAB [Lethaby joined the Committee in 1893]. Gimson, Lethaby and the rest spent many of their evenings with Webb and Morris in the SPAB rooms. When the business of the meeting was over the party would adjourn to Gatti's for supper and the discussion would be widened to cover every aspect of architecture and design.¹⁰

⁷ Martin (*op. cit.*) gives both (at different points in his thesis) the dates of 1891 and 1892 for this event.

⁸ *Ernest Gimson—His Life and Work*, co-authored by Lethaby and F.L. Griggs, 1924, pp. 3-4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹⁰ “After William Morris”, *op. cit.*, 1970, p. 53

Webb's "school," Brandon-Jones further noted, included not only Lethaby and his friends from Shaw's office but also several young men who held positions in the newly-founded Architecture Department of the London County Council.¹¹ Thus, Webb's influence on this important body was felt as it was on those in Shaw's office, including Lethaby.

Lethaby's education through his SPAB involvement thus continued into the last years of the nineteenth century, even after he had set up as an independent architect. The discussion in Chapter XIV on international connections, demonstrates that Lethaby kept abreast of architectural developments outside England, including those relating to education. From the correspondence between Lethaby and his friend Harry Peach one can cite the example (from 1923) of Lethaby's sending Peach a clipping from The New Leader entitled "New Education Methods in Germany" and earlier, Peach's comment to Lethaby (1916) about a new degree in industrial art and interior decoration to be offered by Columbia University in New York.¹²

Jobs and Other Activities

Another brief prefatory discussion, on the modes Lethaby was able to utilize in disseminating his ideas on education, is offered next to further provide a useful context in which to view Lethaby's ideas on education. These ideas were widely spread through Lethaby's publications and the talks he gave. The most important of those, concerning education, will be mentioned in the initial part of the discussion of Lethaby's thoughts about education to be undertaken later. Lethaby's ongoing vocational and avocational educational activities especially involved his role as director of the London Central School of Arts and Crafts, his professorship at the Royal College of Art, his involvement with the R.I.B.A. committee on education and his activities connected with the SPAB. These organizations, and others with which

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² April 1, 1916 letter from Peach, from the RIBA Drawings Collection. The 1923 letter from Lethaby, also from RIBA Drawings Collection, is dated January 2—the clipping was from December 29, 1922, an article by Nicolaus Henningsen. Lethaby expressed his admiration for a number of foreign personalities concerned with education—for example, such contemporaries as the Austrian historian Professor Strzygowski and the Americans John Dewey and Henry James and from an earlier generation, the Frenchman E.E. Violet-le-Duc.

Lethaby was associated are linked to his success in communicating his ideas on education since some of Lethaby's writings on this subject appeared in the organs of these organizations and his talks on the subject sometimes occurred under their sponsorship.

Perhaps the first of Lethaby's education-related job activities worthy of mention is his involvement with the London Central School of Arts and Crafts. In many ways, this is also the most important because the impact of Lethaby's involvement is so far-reaching.

In 1892, not long after embarking on his own independent architectural practice, Lethaby received an appointment as an Art Advisor to the Technical Education Board of the London County Council. The Technical Education Board had decided to take up the "question of art in industry," so Robert Schultz Weir related in a paper on Lethaby in 1938, and also to start a school to teach "art in application to the crafts."¹³ This facility opened at Morley Hall, 316 Regent Street, London, on November 2, 1896, after negotiations with the Regent Street Polytechnic, across the street. Lethaby and the sculptor George Frampton, were installed as joint principals.¹⁴ The new Central School of Arts and Crafts, as it was called, shared facilities with a new London day training college for teachers.¹⁵ Despite the joint principal arrangement, Lethaby was, in fact, the undisputed leader of the school, shaping its policy and convincing many of the outstanding teachers the school has known to join the organization.¹⁶ Stuart Macdonald, in History and Philosophy of Art Education (1970), made this comment characterizing Lethaby's involvement with the school: "Lethaby ...gathered about himself a group of expert craftsmen—teachers,

¹³ "W.R. Lethaby" (22 pages), printed at the Central School of Arts and Crafts (London), p. 16.

¹⁴ "William Richard Lethaby—1857-1931," Part V: "Lethaby as Teacher and Friend", R.I.B.A.J., April, 1957, p. 223, by A.R.N. Roberts.

¹⁵ William Richard Lethaby, A.R.N. Roberts, 1957 (publ. by the London Central School), p. 36.

¹⁶ "Lethaby as Teacher and Friend" (*op. cit.*), p. 224 and Stuart MacDonald, History and Philosophy of Art Education (1970) p. 297. Frampton, who had also been appointed Art Advisor like Lethaby in 1892, remained, according to A.R.N. Roberts, a "shadowy figure." Roberts, in his 1957 recollection of Lethaby stated that, from the first, it was Lethaby's influence as opposed to Frampton's, which helped shape the London Central School. Lethaby, in a statement prepared as part of a 1910 application for the post of Slade Professor acknowledged that his role at the London Central School was a major one: "I have organized their scheme of art education." (In the British Museum collection of information on Lethaby.)

and thus founded a school which quickly became the largest center for craft education in Britain.”¹⁷

Lethaby was responsible for bringing the renowned calligrapher Edward Johnston to the Central School. Lethaby’s friend, the prominent Arts and Crafts architect, Halsey Ricardo, was the school’s first teacher of architecture.¹⁸ The goal of the school, synthesizing the teaching of art and the teaching of crafts, was a radical undertaking, in its time and the approach spawned (as noted in Chapter XII on international connections) some very important related developments involving the Deutscher Werkbund and the Bauhaus.

New quarters for the Central School were planned and built and the new facilities opened on Southampton Row, in 1908, based on plans drawn up by W.E. Riley, the London County Council Architect. These plans reflected requirements conveyed by Dr. William Garnett, education advisor to the London County Council.¹⁹ Lethaby, however, apparently also played a major role in determining the nature of the new building via frequent consultation.²⁰ He continued to direct the school until his resignation in 1911 at which time Fred V. Burridge, former head of a school in Liverpool, took over.²¹

Another of Lethaby’s undertakings, also representing a major involvement in education, was his association with the Royal College of Art.²² Lethaby’s association with this institution overlapped to a significant degree his work at the London Central School, for it was in 1900 that he was appointed first

¹⁷ MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

¹⁸ Roberts’ Central School pamphlet (*op. cit.*), from which this information is drawn, is not clear as to whether Ricardo was the first teacher of architecture at the school and, if so, if his appointment dated from the original founding of the school in 1896.

¹⁹ Roberts, *op. cit.* (Central School pamphlet), p. 36. Roberts reported that these premises then were only half the size they had become by 1957.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Lethaby laid the foundation stone for the new building in 1905.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39. The name of the facility had changed by 1970 to the Central School of Art and Design. Martin, *op. cit.* also gave 1911 as the date for Lethaby’s resignation but others (for example, F.W. Troup, in his obituary for Lethaby, August 8, 1931, *R.I.B.A.J.* p. 697) gave 1912. A chronological list, dealing with Lethaby’s biography in sketchbook #28 (1893, also numbered “21”) in the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection also gives a 1912 date for the resignation but this date (1912) appears to be wrong. (The sketchbook gives at least two other incorrect dates—1894 for Lethaby’s first involvement with the London Central School and 1897 for his being made principal of it.)

²² So named since 1896.

Professor of Design at the Royal College.²³ Roberts has reported that Lethaby played a considerable role in the reorganization of the college in the early years of the twentieth century.²⁴ This reorganization, apparently rather radical, began in 1901. The College was divided into four schools—Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, and Design—divisions kept essentially the same until 1948.²⁵ The attraction of bringing Lethaby in at this time no doubt had to do with the nature of his work at the London Central School and his success in pursuing aims there which tied into recent developments in the immediate past history of the College. For, although the school was dedicated to the practical arts and to design (it had opened as the School of Design in 1837) and had been renamed the Central School of Practical Arts in 1852, by 1888, three quarters of the 420 students enrolled then were categorized as “fine artists,” and the practical training of “designers” was thought to be suffering.²⁶

From 1888 to 1898 there had been a strong attempt to encourage the applied arts (this author’s source did not say what the attendance was from 1898-1900) and perhaps an aspect of this attempt was Lethaby’s appointment. Perhaps Lethaby was aware of the challenge of helping in the re-organization of the College, for Basil Ward, writing in 1957 of Lethaby’s appointment, quoted him as saying “I feel a call like Livingstone to darkest Africa. They’ll probably eat me.”²⁷ Lethaby’s tenure at the RCA does not appear to have involved the planning of any new facilities for the institution, at least not on the scale of

²³ The 1973-74 RCA Calendar (Catalog) gives the date of Lethaby’s appointment as 1901 although all other sources encountered (Troup, op. cit.; Martin, op. cit.; Blomfield’s “W.R. Lethaby...An Impression and a Tribute,” R.I.B.A.J., Vol. 38, #8, 1932, p. 7, orig. from a paper read to the R.I.B.A., February, 1932; Bayley, op. cit.), p. 29, all say 1900. The school had been at its South Kensington location since 1859. Other significant related events in education at this the time were taking place in Liverpool (c. 1909) when the University there founded the first full-time Chair of Architecture at a British University and created a second precedent in founding a Chair of Town Planning. (Service, Edwardian Architecture..., 1975 op. cit., p. 348.)\

²⁴ Roberts, op. cit. (Central School pamphlet), p. 224.

²⁵ R.C.A., 1973-74 Calendar.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “Lethaby-Architect, Designer and Teacher”, Design, 1957, p. 46.

those he was involved with for the London Central School.²⁸ His fellow student from the Royal Academy, Beresford Pite, was the architecture teacher at the College, Blomfield has reported.²⁹ Lethaby's association with the College lasted until 1918 with his resignation. To some extent, the thought of his education philosophy must have been perpetuated through E.W. Tristram, a former pupil of Lethaby's who acceded to the post as Professor of Design following Lethaby, until his own retirement in 1948.

The first decade of the twentieth century must have been a tremendously active time for Lethaby for, in addition to his work at the London Central School and the Royal College of Art (and still, in the earliest years of the decade, not having yet given up his private practice) he was appointed to the prestigious and no doubt, with Lethaby's aims, demanding post of Surveyor to Westminster Abbey. Also, Lethaby became involved in another undertaking important to his educational interests, the drafting of a document for the R.I.B.A. intended to influence how architects were to be trained.

In 1904 the R.I.B.A. Board of Architectural Education had decided to, as Brandon-Jones has described, "lay down a syllabus for the [various] schools of architecture that were then begun [beginning] to be established as an alternative to articulated pupilage [apprenticeship]."³⁰ When they realized that the Institute was taking the problem of architectural education seriously, Lethaby, Thomas Graham, Jackson, and Basil Champneys (incidentally, also members of the Art Workers Guild) decided to take an active part.³¹ Brandon-Jones, discussing in 1970 this syllabus-writing effort, emphasized the strong influence that the Art Workers Guild members on the Board exercised, since they magnified their perspective by working closely together.³² Other like-minded members of the board included Lethaby's colleagues from

²⁸ MacDonald, *op. cit.*, described the facilities for craftsmen at the L.C.C. as "far superior to those of the Royal College" (p. 297) but he may have been describing conditions prior to Lethaby's arrival at the RCA, whereupon, presumably, some improvements would have taken place.

²⁹ Blomfield, 1932, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³⁰ "After William Morris," *op. cit.*, p. 54. The Institute, Brandon-Jones reported here also, had been experimenting with voluntary examinations leading to an Associate membership in the Institute.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

school days at the Royal Academy, Beresford Pite (who also worked with Lethaby at the RCA) and Attwood Slater. They also took a leading part (along with Lethaby) in the drafting of a new architectural education syllabus. It was Lethaby, however, although the finished syllabus (1906) did not appear above his signature, who was the prime leader. As Brandon-Jones described the situation:

Lethaby as usual, was the leader, and I have it on authority...that although the first R.I.B.A. Syllabus of 1906 appears over the signature of Reginald Blomfield [also a student-mate of Lethaby at the Royal Academy and fellow member of the AWG] and John Slater as joint Honorary Secretaries, it was in fact mainly based upon Lethaby's draft.³³

Brandon-Jones described the syllabus as “a key document” and “truly... remarkable.”³⁴ He observed also that although some of the ideas of the syllabus were taken up in the early days of newly formed English architectural schools, many important parts were neglected and several generations of students were encouraged to design, counter to Lethaby's warning, by “direct copying.”³⁵

A few other education-related observations might be mentioned. Lethaby in 1910 applied unsuccessfully for the Slade Professorship at Oxford. He stated in his application for the position that he was interested in getting university men interested in architecture and other arts, and in the “artistic crafts.”³⁶ He closed his submittal with a familiar articulation of his belief (and intent if appointed) that students should go beyond traditional academic avenues of gaining knowledge and also expressed his hope (still not realized in the mid-1970s?) of forming a school of art (and architecture?) at the university:

³³ In regard to Beresford Pite and Attwood Slater, see Brandon-Jones' “The Architectural Work of William Richard Lethaby,” Part II of “William Richard Lethaby-1857-1931,” *R.I.B.A.J.*, April, 1957, p. 219. For the quote, see the same author's “After William Morris,” *op.cit.*, p. 54. In this second source Brandon-Jones dated the production of the syllabus as 1906-1907; in his article “The Architect Who Turned Teacher,” *The Listener*, 22 Jan., 1948, p. 147, he dated it as 1906, saying there also that Lethaby took a leading role. (Some other sources say 1906-1907.)

³⁴ In his 1970 and 1957 articles just cited.

³⁵ Brandon-Jones, “After William Morris” (*op.cit.*), p. 58. In Brandon-Jones' earlier “The Architect Who Turned Teacher” (*op.cit.*), there are similar observations, and also that the R.I.B.A. remained a symbol of “paper work” (p. 147). It should be noted that Brandon-Jones has had a long involvement himself with the Art Workers Guild (he was its president at the time of the 1957 writing) and presumably an Arts and Crafts theoretical bias might influence his interpretations of these events. Lethaby was still active on the R.I.B.A.'s Education Board in 1910 (the year he refused their Gold Medal).

³⁶ March 17, 1910. Typewritten statement.

“...I feel that lectures are of little value unless some response is obtained from the students and my endeavor would be to encourage them to draw and design and make researches themselves, with a hope that a School of Art might be built up in the University.”³⁷ Brandon-Jones has remarked how Webb’s built work served as a teaching example to others (for example, through Hugh Stannus’ organized visits to view Webb’s houses), and it seems reasonable to assume that Lethaby’s own small oeuvre of built works was used in this manner by some.³⁸ In the course of both his practice and his writing career, Lethaby collaborated with others known for their interest and activities in education. In working on the Eagle Insurance Buildings in Birmingham (from 1906) for example, Lethaby collaborated with the Birmingham architect Joseph Lancaster Ball who was, from 1909 to 1916, Director of the Birmingham School of Architecture. Ball contributed an essay to the collection Architecture: A Profession or an Art? (1892), op.cit., edited by Thomas Graham Jackson, also a professor.

Publications and Addresses

It was of course a natural function of his position as Principal of the London Central School and as Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art for Lethaby to express (and implement) his views on education. No doubt large numbers of students and colleagues at both institutions felt his impact. Also of course, through his voluntary activities as a member of the S.P.A.B., the Society of Antiquaries and other organizations, there were similar opportunities. As Surveyor to Westminster Abbey, as well, he likely viewed his duties there as, in part, didactic. To expand on this last point, the architectural duties Lethaby performed at the Abbey and his explanations preceding, accompanying, and following these must have been viewed, given Lethaby’s inclinations, as partly exemplary in function. To more general audiences

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See Brandon-Jones’ “After William Morris,” op.cit., in reference to Stannus’ dissemination of Webb’s teaching by making trips to the built “examples.” Stannus was a member of the Art Workers Guild, but, perhaps more importantly in terms of his potential for spreading Webb’s ideas, Honorary Secretary of the Architectural Association.

Lethaby was able to offer his views on education (including architectural) through public talks and publications.

Lethaby's thoughts on education appear frequently in his publications and a comment about education could surface in an article which focused primarily on some other topic. There are, however, some titles in Lethaby's literary *oeuvre* which specifically deal with education—with education generally, or more specifically with art education or (even more specifically) with architectural education. Almost all of these fall within the period when Lethaby worked actively as a teacher, the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth—a period quite long in duration.

Of those titles not concerned essentially with architecture, one might mention first (ordered chronologically) his pamphlet Apprenticeship and Education from 1910, which stemmed from his talk at the International Conference on Drawing held in South Kensington that year.³⁹ Next might be mentioned two works from 1916. The first, "Education, Work and Beauty," identifies his paper read that year before the Conference of the People's National Education Union and later printed as a pamphlet as well as being reprinted in the periodical Parent's Review.⁴⁰ The same year came "The Place of Art in Education," published in the September 27 issue of Teacher's World (as the lead article, with Lethaby's portrait and the beginnings of the article's text appearing on the front page.⁴¹ A few years later (1919) at the Education Conference at Southport, Lethaby delivered the address "Education for Appreciation or for Production," an effort which was later reprinted (1922) in one of Lethaby's most influential books, Form in Civilization.⁴² Also in 1919 Lethaby contributed "Education for Industry" to the collection of essays

³⁹ A three-page pamphlet printed at Leicester.

⁴⁰ Six-page pamphlet, also repr. after 1931, in the anthologous Art, Handicraft and Education.

⁴¹ Also repr. in Art Handicraft and Education (ed. unknown, after 1931).

⁴² Posener discussed this work and a number of others by Lethaby in his book from 1964 on the beginnings of Functionalism, op.cit.

written by members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and published as Handicraft and Reconstruction.⁴³

All of the above titles address the problem of education as it might affect some aspect of artistic activity.⁴⁴ Another group of writings by Lethaby, which includes some of Lethaby's early efforts, suggest in their titles a concern principally with architecture and building. One year after becoming Principal of the London Central School (1897) Lethaby gave his talk "Technical Education and the Building Trades" to the Technical Education Congress.⁴⁵ Just after the turn of the century (1901) came his "Education in Building," a paper read before the R.I.B.A. and then published that year in the R.I.B.A. Journal and, in 1904, "Architectural Education: A Discussion," appearing in the Architectural Review.⁴⁶ Near the time of Lethaby's retirement from active teaching duties at the Royal College of Art he gave the address "The Education of the Architect" to a conference in 1917. This was published that year also in the R.I.B.A.J. and republished in 1922 in Lethaby's Form and Civilisation. The following year, as part of Lethaby's series in The Builder entitled "A National Architecture" was the section (appearing December 20) "Education for Building." The next education-related title apart from two pieces republished in Form and Civilization and already mentioned, came also as part of a larger series in The Builder, the August 3, 1923 installment of "The Building Art: Theories and Discussions." This was entitled "The Two Architectures and Education for Building."⁴⁷ Last could be mentioned Lethaby's earlier letter published in 1911 in the

⁴³ Possibly published much earlier, c. 1888-1890.

⁴⁴ One could mention also the manuscripts "Art Teaching" (dated February, 1924) and "Education Again" (n.d.), both with Lethaby's papers at Barnstable.

⁴⁵ This was publ. under the same title that year in the Journal of the Society of the Arts.

⁴⁶ The 1901 talk was given June 17 and published that year in the Journal, Vol. VIII, p. 385. In regard to the 1904 citation, at least one other prominent Arts and Crafts architect, Leonard Stokes, heard the address and commented on it during the discussion period afterwards (p. 157, Architectural Review.) Of similar date is fellow architectural teacher Thomas Graham Jackson's essay on education in Architecture, A Profession or an Art? (1892), edited by himself and Norman Shaw.

⁴⁷ August 3, 1923, p. 176.

R.I.B.A.J. This one, in connection with the International Congress on Architectural Education, was entitled “Architectural Education and the Future.”⁴⁸

Education in General—Criticisms—and Advice

In the 1920s a number of Lethaby’s general criticisms about education as he encountered it in his own time can be found. In “The Center of Gravity” (1920) he articulated in his gently sarcastic style his reservations about scholarship and a “library education”: “The thoroughly educated literary person is such a fine and fragile flower that he is little likely to produce anything beyond critical and even cynical and corrosive opinion.”⁴⁹ Similarly, the same year, one finds Lethaby writing to his friend Sidney Cockerell: “...book-reading is drunkenness! Hugo’s [i.e. Victor Hugo] ‘this will kill that’ I used to think a brilliant phrase; now I see it is inevitably true, till the ‘book-magic’ age goes up the universal spout.”⁵⁰ Lethaby wrote in 1920 also, in “Architecture as Form in Civilization” that modern education in general trained one to appreciate the past; it was not oriented towards present “production” and added: “Such merely critical learning comes at last to be sterilizing.”⁵¹

The next year, in his series “Modernism and Design” in The Builder Lethaby complained that present schools existed only as ends in themselves and that students were in no hurry to leave and get on with, presumably, something more important:

Schools are, of course, the most delightful of human institutions, and they must be good—good itself. Yes, so are nurseries, but you must come out in time . . . Schools exist largely for professors and examiners, and teachers teach their own calling. Education of its own motion

⁴⁸ The Conference dates were July 28-August 2, 1924. The letter also appeared that year (with the same title) in The British Architect. Publications by later writers taking note of Lethaby’s role as a teacher include John Brandon-Jones’ article, “The Architect Who Turned Teacher” printed in The Listener (January 1948) and in the Architectural Association Journal (1949) and Stuart MacDonald’s The History and Philosophy of Art Education (1970). Brandon-Jones’ effort took the form initially of a BBC radio broadcast in 1948).

⁴⁹ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 233.

⁵⁰ January 12, 1920. Meynell, op. cit., 1940, p. 137

⁵¹ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 16. Judging by another of Lethaby’s comments, the “critical learning,” which must at least allow for the possibility of challenging intellectual processes, did not take place: “Much education is only substituting words for thoughts.” (“The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby,” Section entitled “Lethaby and Life,” The Builder, 29 Jan., 1932, p. 219. (Original source and date in Lethaby’s writing not given.)

would make the steps of approach so gradual that it would really become instruction in how not to get there. Moreover, the happy student does not want to get there [either]—he wants to stay.⁵²

Also, the same year he complained of the purposeless and lack of direction he found in present-day education. His talk to the London Central School is paraphrased in coverage of the talk appearing in The Builder:

He wondered what they [one] really meant by education. At present It was a sort of mental machinery for pushing round, but nobody asked what it was for or where it was going. Students were plunged into what was called education—a certain amount of geography and arithmetic, and so on, and in a vague sort of way it was supposed to be necessary for living. And so it was, but no general idea of the objective toward which civilization might be shaped was ever put into their heads.⁵³

Further in the same talk, on such issues as the failure of the schools to give effective guidance to students to use in life and the superiority (and relevance) of action over books Lethaby's thoughts were thusly summarized:

...an undue number of young people failed in life because an ambition had not been put before them which they could understand while they were young. They were all squeezed through the literary mill. Life's ideals had not been put before them in ways they could understand; they were puzzled and confused by books when really they had a love for doing,...nearly everything had become so generalized and made so remote.⁵⁴

Two years later (1923) Lethaby's general criticism of education also centered on the failure to give guidance, to teach values and what aims in life should be sought. In "Architects' Ambitions"—Part I of the series in The Builder, "The Building Art: Theories and Discussions" Lethaby wrote:

⁵² January 7, 1921, p. 31.

⁵³ "Professor Lethaby on Our Hope for the Future," March 25, 1921, p. 379. Originally given as an address to the London Central School (to students and others), March 15, 1921.

⁵⁴ Ibid. The idea of schools functioning to separate students from reality is also contained in a quote collected by Alfred Powell (in Scripts and Scraps, 1956, *op. cit.*): "Education should be for integration; it has been for isolation" (p.54). Also: (in regard to "doing"): "My main notion, I think, is that 'Education' and aims want to be re-orientated towards doing and making rather than towards words and logic 'knowing.' " (p. 27). For both quotes, original source and date not given.

One of the greatest faults of all kinds of modern “education” is that it is very shy of raising any question about aims, ends and sanctions. This education fears to make positive assumptions, so it makes negative ones—you cannot escape them—and it has become largely mechanical: it teaches reading in elementary schools, but does not attempt to say what is worth painting; it teaches what it calls “Architecture” in what it calls *Ateliers*, but it is extraordinarily feeble in anything like definition, explanation or justification. It seems to put its trust in turning the wheels ever more quickly and blowing steam whistles to keep our courage up. We teach all things as mechanisms, not for mind and spirit, the community and right.⁵⁵

Lethaby continued on to identify another general problem with education, the fostering of selfish attitudes amongst the students brought about by the presence of individual competitiveness in place of communal goals: “The second great mistake of modern education, I suggest, is that it fosters and forces the personal competitive spirit, by marks and distinctions, and prizes: it still prepares young men as rats or bulls are bred for the ring. Indeed, it is almost a wonder that bookmakers do not quote the odds on favourites.”⁵⁶

And further, he said:

If we would only think of it for two minutes, I believe it would appear self-evident that education should be concerned with groups, and should train for community development rather than for individual scrambling and scoring. In our own art of building little or nothing is taught of its proper purpose and noble human service, but the students are incited to make a show of all that is most superficial, misleading and personal.⁵⁷

Some themes expressed earlier in the decade (for example, in reference to anti-book learning and to putting more emphasis on “doing”) are evident in his talk of 1926 “Industry and the Notion of Art,” given at the Seventh Annual Lecture Conference on Industrial Welfare at Oxford: “Education has to look outside the barrier of books and the image of works, and embrace the thought of making things and doing deeds.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ January 5, 1923, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Conference at Bailliol College, September, 1926; the quote is from the publication of Lethaby’s talk, p. 37 of the *Proceedings* (bound volume). Powell in *Scripts and Scraps*, *op.cit.*, provided a similar remark by Lethaby: “Education is better underdone than overdone. Education must look beyond the barrier of books.” (p. 54, orig. source and date in Lethaby’s writing not given.)

On the more positive side, Lethaby had included, in the previously mentioned letter of 1920 to Sydney Cockerell, who was after all known as a scholar, that perhaps academic pursuits could be given a place: "...scholarship may function too in its sphere, if it don't [sic] kill out the strength of t'others and pretend to be alone 'knowledge.'"⁵⁹ In Lethaby's talk at the Central School on "Our Hope for the Future" he explained, by way of constructive commentary, that education should re-orient itself to provide a training ground for "living." As paraphrased in The Builder:

His first hope would be for the re-casting of education so as to make it, not a preliminary mystification which frightened children, but a kindly introduction into living—an apprenticeship into civilisation. Education of late years had been a growing surprise for him... he never found work mentioned at all in life, in anything. He would like education to take some account of work.⁶⁰

Criticism and Advice More Specifically Related to Art Education

From the same source just discussed, it is possible to extract comments by Lethaby about present art education as a self-perpetuating process that show a similarity to the criticism he leveled the same year (1921) in his series "Modernism and Design" against education in general. Lethaby said, in the Central School talk that he hoped for a better understanding of what was meant by art and art education because, as paraphrased in a report on the talk in The Builder:

It seemed sometimes that there was a danger of art education being understood as a sort of endless approach to a goal that was never reached. The goal, of course, was fine production, but they went on educating and educating, and in many cases the goal was never reached. This very education itself might become a disease.⁶¹

Also in the Central School talk Lethaby told of his belief that drawing, an aptitude he said had been widespread two hundred or three hundred years ago ("it was in the blood of the people"), had been killed

⁵⁹ Meynell, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

⁶⁰ "Prof. Lethaby on 'Our Hope for the Future' " (1921), op. cit., p. 379. A less clear passage, also paraphrased in The Builder followed: "Natural education would set about educating various powers in the people and suggesting different types of life. One of his hopes was that it might be made the opening-up of thousands of different types of ambition." (same page).

⁶¹ Ibid.

off by too much teaching—by a process that had produced instead of mass participation, only a few experts.⁶² The stress in olden days on “doing” rather than on academic learning (a genre relegated to the clergy then) as applied to the arts is brought out in another passage from Lethaby’s talk (as paraphrased in The Builder):

There were two main conceptions of learning and teaching. One came from the clergy—the literary idea, the idea that education should be forever a study of grammars and forms. They were never up to date with that form of learning... It was the idea that they must be perfectly and finally educated before they went out on the first step. The other way was the really practical way. Although there might be a certain stratum of preliminary training, in the end the right way to learn the arts, and the only way, was to learn by doing.⁶³

Lethaby said in this talk that he hoped one day to see art education as approximating apprenticeship, that it should lead up to various forms of production.⁶⁴ This emphasis on production in art school appears also in the previously cited lecture of 1926 at Oxford (“Industry and the Notion of Art”): “Our art schools have to be refined into centres of actual production rather than for teaching ‘art in general,’ which is an unknown in the real world.”⁶⁵

In 1929, in Lethaby’s pamphlet Designing Games, he also stated that art teaching should be limited to issues of production and not to dwell on “genius,” “originality” and “style.” For Lethaby, art had become (needlessly) too complicated for ordinary people. Some of our “art teaching,” he wrote, “has consisted of frightening people out of their wits, whereas it should boldly lead them to produce.”⁶⁶ In Lethaby’s talk at the Central School earlier in the decade, he had linked the function of art schools with the goal of ensuring that society would continue to view art (if in fact it did) as an important need. As paraphrased in The Builder: “Art Schools should not be mere drawing schools where accomplishment

⁶² Ibid. Quote is taken from the paraphrasing in The Builder, the rest is this author’s paraphrasing.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Op. cit., p. 38.

⁶⁶ Dryad Handicrafts leaflet #40, p. 2. Printed in Leicester.

was taught; they should not even be design or craft schools, but they should be centres for keeping alive in society the idea that the mysterious thing ‘Art’ was a great necessity.”⁶⁷ Powell, in *Scripts and Scraps* provided some related thoughts of Lethaby on “art schools,” especially that they should be more closely integrated into the respective urban fabric in which they are sustained. In fact, Lethaby thought they should be foci of their respective towns. Some activities that could be directed towards accomplishing these aims would include “observing” and “recording” (no further specifics on this are given) and actual production of objects in the schools should be another goal to be realized with all possible speed:

My thought for improving the schools is that they should become more closely parts of the intimate life and work of the several towns in which they exist—local centres for civilization rather than for raising up so many individual prize getters. Observing and recording would naturally be part of such a purpose...as far and as fast as possible, the schools should be transformed into real making shops.⁶⁸

Architectural Education—Criticism

Lethaby, from the late 1890s to near the end of the second decade of the following century, attempted to implement in the school systems in which he was working his own ideas on architectural education. These views, to be described in the following pages, ran against those more harmonious with the potent classicizing trends in architecture of the times, trends which induced features in architectural training (if indeed they had not been there all along) that Lethaby found quite objectionable. Two assessments of the influence of classicizing trends on architectural education in these years (and Beaux Arts teaching methods) by later writers are cited here, before proceeding to Lethaby’s own related thoughts. John Brandon-Jones, writing in 1957, expressed a point of view which Lethaby might have shared: “It was a great misfortune for British Architecture that the movement [i.e. The Arts and Crafts Movement], started so hopefully, was overlaid by the importation of a watered-down version of the

⁶⁷ “Professor Lethaby on ‘Our Hope for the Future’ ” (1921), p. 379

⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

Beaux Arts system of design, which encouraged the schools to teach draughtsmanship rather than building.”⁶⁹ John Warren in 1975, offered this less partisan view of the situation around 1910:

Architectural education had [by then] ...taken tremendous steps forward...a sudden revulsion from the glazed tile moulding and the Gothic fireplace. Ruskin’s medieval casts found their way to the basements of the advanced schools and classical busts took their places... In 1911 came the inception of the long discussed British School in Rome. Thus an upsurge of academic study smoothly buoyed up the established purveyors of “The Orders,” refining and distinguishing much that had been coarse and unstudied.⁷⁰

In a later passage, Service added: “The influence of the schools and the number of schools-trained men, however increased; published designs and completed buildings bear witness to the growing classical scholarship of the bulk of architects.”⁷¹

Some of the earliest of Lethaby’s publications in which there is commentary addressing the training of architects seems to focus on the importance of realizing that architecture is an art and that art cannot be taught. In “Of the Motive” (1889), Lethaby criticized his own training without saying much about it, except that it was “without art.”⁷² In the same work Lethaby stressed the value of instinct: “no formula will make it clear.”⁷³ This caution against the use of a “formula” would seem to apply not only to architectural practice but also to architectural training. Two years later (1891) he wrote that if architecture is an art (and he so maintained), it could not be taught.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ “The Architectural Work of W.R. Lethaby,” Part II of “William Richard Lethaby” (in which several authors wrote segments), R.I.B.A.J., April, 1957, p. 219. In a later article, “After William Morris”, (Artifex, Volume 4, 1970), Brandon-Jones also mentioned the attempts to revive in England the Beaux Arts system of architectural education in the first decades of the twentieth century, citing the schools of the Architectural Association and Liverpool University. Lethaby had written, similarly, to his friend Cockerell in 1920: “...our [architectural] teaching has swung back to mere academic rote, and just the same old mysterious ‘architecture’...” (op. cit., Meynell, 1940, p. 137, letter dated December 5, 1922.)

⁷⁰ “Edwin Alfred Rickards,” chapter in Service’s Edwardian Architecture and Its Origins, 1975, op.cit., p. 348.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² AA Notes, p. 24.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Architectural (?) Examination,” AA Notes, Vol. V, No. 5, May, 1891, p. 115.

Later criticism, on a different tack, appeared in 1910 in Lethaby's "Apprenticeship and Education." This had to do with Lethaby's reservations about "builders" (a term synonymous with "architects," as Lethaby would have wished it) receiving academic training through a university. He feared that going through standard university courses would injure the "force of productive gifts" of such students.⁷⁵ The next year, in Architecture, he scored the wastefulness of the present system of architectural education, citing his own case. As to the study of the past as a part of preparing for the future Lethaby did not give this, then, the highest priority. Even though he himself had studied older architecture profitably (he mentioned studying Cathedrals from Kirkwall to Rome and Quimper to Constantinople) he said it was better to have knowledge of new materials; he mentioned steel and concrete specifically.⁷⁶ Architecture was too archaeological at present, he said.⁷⁷

At the beginning of the next decade, in "The Centre of Gravity" (1920), Lethaby criticized the Education Act of 1870, labeling it "organized ignorance." Its evil had to do with its effect, as he saw it, the direction of students (including architectural students) away from learning by doing and towards more traditional academic processes. The Act, he wrote, "turned the youth of the country from the practice of things into readers of print."⁷⁸ The following year, in Lethaby's series "Modernism and Design" in The Builder he offered a number of criticisms of current architectural education. In the January 7 installment Lethaby commented on what he viewed as remoteness from reality in the schools: "In schools of design you study oracles, inspirations, mysteries, books, papers: a really fine 'school of architecture' is likely to be a seminary for catechumens who will take the veil of art and fly from the harsh world as it is."⁷⁹ Irrelevance was underscored in the series in the September installment when Lethaby offered, in parody, a

⁷⁵ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 139.

⁷⁶ As in 1955 ed., p. 191.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ As repr. in Form in..., 1922, p. 232.

⁷⁹ 1921, p. 31.

student architectural design problem at the beginning of the section “Building Commonplaces—the Substance of Architectures” (Section IX).

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
a stately pleasure dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man.”

Make a design for the above. The central feature to be dome 202'-3½" in diameter, and the height to be proportionate. It is to be of polished black basalt erected in the centre of an octagonal basin of quicksilver, situated just beyond the principal cave (which should be shown in sections). The “dome” must be approached from each side by causeways of porphyry through triumphal arches of jade.⁸⁰

Lethaby continued:

This is the sort of problem our educational leaders (misleaders?) put before young architectural students. “It stimulates their imaginations” is the stock argument—for something can always be said for every absurdity. But there is a sad and stern answer: “Yes, but they will not recover from the stimulus.” How indeed, could anyone care for the facts of a grocer’s shop and promises in Bethnal Green after having had their imaginations fired by the wonders of an architecture built of rainbows and mist?⁸¹

The next month, in the same series, the injurious character of the architectural schools was again cited: “...we maintain big institutions for crushing men’s heads.”⁸² He also complained there about the continued teaching of the “orders” in the schools. One should not be learning in school to cover one’s buildings with past “style” details. For a hundred years, he wrote, there had been advice that “architecture as an ‘application’ is all wrong.”⁸³ He continued, contrasting the life and death-struggles of men in war (he was thinking particularly of War I here) returning to toil at such meaningless (in Lethaby’s view)

⁸⁰ September 2, 1921, p. 288. The poem “Kubla Khan” is by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was composed in 1797 and published in 1816.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² “Planning, Composition and Block-Form,” Part X of “Modernism and Design,” *The Builder*, p. 450.

⁸³ Ibid. The complete quote is as follows: “Now, we have been told for one hundred years that the idea of constructing ornaments and looking on architecture as ‘application’ is all wrong, but the educational machine by the whirring round of its wheels within—wheels once more comes to this. We pity the Chinese women for deforming their feet while we maintain big institutions for crushing men’s heads. I really am a little disheartened.”

tasks as learning the applications of the “orders”: “I really am a little disheartened;... I know everybody is full of goodwill, but think of men who drove tanks and piloted “planes coming back to draw” the application of the orders,” as required for the examinations. Great diseases spring from small infections, and the word “orders” has been singularly betraying.”⁸⁴ In the December segment of the series (entitled “Architectural Theory and Building Practice”), Lethaby stated more generally that one of the main problems with modern architecture was the architect’s training.⁸⁵ He distinguished between the kind of building art that is taught and that which he termed creative: “Creative construction is that kind of construction which the manipulators of the material evoke for themselves. Imitative construction is the kind which is taught.”⁸⁶

Two years later, more criticisms of present-day architectural education follow in another series in The Builder, one entitled “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions.” In Part I, “Architect’s Ambitions” (January 5, 1923) Lethaby criticized architectural training in terms of the kind of future employment architects would pursue after leaving school—a kind of employment not oriented as he thought it should be, toward service to the common good and sound building – and did not accord the R.I.B.A. a positive role in current conditions:

It appears that what practising architects most want in any assistants they hire, is efficiency, not in building, but in the get-competition-quick style of drawing and “design.” Students are not trained to be good builders for the nation’s sake, they are rather trained to be showy draughtsmen and colourists so that they may help the employer who bets on them to “pull off the events” for which they enter under the racing rules of the Royal Institute of British Architects.⁸⁷

The August segment of the same series entitled “The Two Architectures and Education for Building” more specifically addressed architectural education and offered some interesting thoughts on

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Part XII of “Modernism and Design,” 2 Dec., 1921, p. 751.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 750.

⁸⁷ January 5, 1923, p. 8.

the subject. In one, Lethaby again parodies the kind of architectural design problems that are posed to students to underline his disdain for “paper” designs:

When design is approached on paper by the method of the schools you are likely to get such subjects as this: “A prince’s palace in the capital of Ruritannia, having an axial approach from the principal “Place” of the city by a bridge across a river. In front of the palace is a circular colonnade 1,000 feet in diameter, and at the centre is placed a gilt bronze equestrian statue of the founder of the dynasty. Farther on, in front of the great porte cochère, are to be found masts, also of bronze and ninety feet high, for flag-waving on occasions of public revelry, which are expected to be continuous. An open Belvidere accessible from the ground suite of the Piano nobile should be provided overlooking the river and in line with the triumphal arch in the centre of the loggia on the far side of the piazza.”⁸⁸

Such problem statements, Lethaby wrote, promote “style-based” architecture. He continued, with cynical statements about the teachers who posed these kinds of problems, about the methods which must be employed to solve the problem and about the quality of the results:

I agree at once that such a style-begging problem, set by grave architectural personages for their own listless amusement, can only be played up to by collecting features from books and photographs and making a grand “composition” full of dash and splash, and “going in” for “going to go it.” This ideal, however, is purely vulgar; it is what might be called auctioneers’ architecture, and the spirit of it was perfectly echoed in a sale bill I saw the other day and copied: ‘Magnificently appointed leasehold town mansion, with handsome elevation carriage drive; rotunda hall with gallery, ballroom, etc., etc. Newly decorated throughout in Period styles. Garage.’⁸⁹

Real building problems, he continued, should be based on practical considerations which, if considered in architectural training as they should be, could leave no room for designing the “visionary whim.”

Approached from the other end—“the human end”—practical building problems are absolutely different from the air designing in fairyland encouraged at architectural school and [by architectural] societies. In real life solutions are so fully conditioned by data, facts, materials, and economics that the object of true education should be to eliminate visionary whim “designing” altogether, and to substitute demonstration.

If we could know enough of all the facts, take them in their right order—the requirements, neighbourhood, aspect, materials, labour, costs and so on—the school view of “design architecture” would be completely pushed out by the thought of making buildings perfect by

⁸⁸ Part VIII, 3 Aug., 1923, pp. 176-177.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

being inevitable. In ateliers they not only have to make bricks without straw, they have to design buildings without the bricks; the method is inverted and perverted, and this being so, it is only a mercy that the results are dreary and unreal beyond estimate. But our eyes are holden and we turn the “design” mill faster and faster as hopefully as Tibetan monks spin their prayer wheels.⁹⁰

In one more passage from Lethaby’s August, 1923 contribution of The Builder, he submitted a more acerbic indictment of present education in the ateliers, describing this kind of experience as largely illusory but one which, unfortunately, had its sequel in real life:

Seminary and semi-conventual learning about architecture in ateliers, far from the world of building operations, itself so artificial and dull that it is only made possible by pleasant companionship, talk about Michelangelo, the acceptance of the style myths, the habit of racing the students in competition so that there shall be no time to wonder what it is all about, and periodic fancy dress plays and jazzes. The imperial manner of atelier design, with all the servant-maid talk about palazzi and piazze, is at most disguised preparation for the kind of fancy-dress show required by department stores and cinemas.⁹¹

In the November offering from this 1923 series Lethaby wrote that present systems of architectural education were “destructive to the faculties of young students.” From the beginning, he said, these systems nourished “a divided mind and personality”; they made a “distinction” between “architectural art” and “building reality.” As to the effects of this on the future he added:

When we are old enough to see through the misleading cloud the time is gone; and more serious still, many never seem to arrive at clear sight and die in their architectural belief! It is a tremendous thing really that he that has been fully betrayed into admiration of “architectural design” will never be able to see and to love the reality of building.⁹²

And in the same issue, Lethaby wrote: “So much wants to be done, but we actually educate how not to do it. Competition in architectural appearances blocks the way to building reality.”⁹³ In the last issue of the year (December), still part of the same series, Lethaby warned that there is no substitute for direct

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² All excerpts quoted thus far in the paragraph taken from Part XI, “Direction and Development,” 2 Nov., 1923, p. 697

⁹³ Ibid.

practical experience: “It may be attempted to make up for lack of practical knowledge in the schools by adding classes to show what work is like. Such showing what things are “like” instead of what they are in the real world, is dangerous and only increases the area of the abstract and unapplied.”⁹⁴

The following year a letter by Lethaby was read to a symposium on the future of architectural education (entitled “Architectural Education in the Future”). Similarly to remarks in the 1923 series in The Builder, Lethaby pointed in this letter to the issue of how the subject of drawing was currently being taught in architectural education programs: “Drawing itself, if I may venture to say so, is in danger of being thought of as a way of preparing fascinating winners in competitions, not as the best way of representation. Fine and sincere drawing is undoubtedly a personal discipline, little as it has to do with the hard realities of building.”⁹⁵ A year after that (1925), in his series on Webb in The Builder, Lethaby launched into a criticism of current architectural teaching practices (and the results) and some comments on Webb’s contemporaries:

For the most part these [contemporaries] followed the movement—backward—of attempting to “revive the Gothic style of design” rather than settling down to perfect a science of modern building. In an age whose characteristic note was said to be Science, “architecture” became a matter of taste, pretence, and superstition. The tragedy of the situation is this: the movement of the teaching machine is such that a young man, however much he may doubt, cannot hope for employment unless he has been finished off in the fluent designing of the schools first, and when he has been thus “done for” it is too late to go back. He, too, must hope to become a “winner” by competitive draughtsmanship, while building knowledge must wait.⁹⁶

Lethaby, in 1925, showed the same antipathy toward “style” concerns in the architectural schools as he had earlier in the decade. Of the ongoing processions of favourite “styles” being taught, he wrote: “In 1912 I recorded that the current liking of the teachers of style was for Cockerell’s sham Greek; since then

⁹⁴ Part XII, “Words or Realities? And Positive Architecture,” 7 Dec., 1923, p. 891.

⁹⁵ R.I.B.A.J., 1924, p. 73. The letter, entitled “Architecture, Design, Education,” was read by Mr. H.M. Fletcher.

⁹⁶ Posthumous edition as the book, Philip Webb (1935), p. 63.

we have had the American view of the Beaux Arts style recommended; now as we enter an era of poverty, the cry is for the Baroque!”⁹⁷

Architectural Education: Advice

One of Lethaby’s earliest printed pieces of prescriptive advice on the education of architects can be found in his “Art, the Crafts and the Function of Guilds” from 1896 wherein he stressed, showing the orthodoxy of his arts and crafts orientation at the time, that the architect could be someone who has been trained in one of the two basic traditional construction crafts, indeed becoming an expert in that and be so acknowledged by those in a position to judge: “The architect must be the man who has gone through the shop and the masons’ or carpenters’ guilds and is elected “Master” by the suffrage of those who know what good workmanship is.”⁹⁸ The next decade provided a greater amount of Lethaby’s prescriptive advice on architectural education. In his article “Architectural Education” in 1904 (*Architectural Review*), Lethaby emphasized in a comment that foretells the ecumenical character of such key early twentieth century organizations for design education as the Bauhaus, that all skilled persons pursuing the building arts (architects, journeymen, carpenters, etc.) should not be separately trained but rather be trained jointly, up to a point at least: “The highly artificial separation of the present system is obviously most disastrous to progress in building, and I feel most strongly that up to a stage all who are to be engaged in building in any skilled capacity should meet in schools common to all.”⁹⁹

In 1904 also, the R.I.B.A.’s Education Board was formed with Lethaby emerging, as previously noted, as its intellectual leader. A prime result of the Board’s activities was the 1906-1907 draft of a syllabus for architectural education. Although the document is a joint effort, an examination of its key attributes shows Lethaby’s influence. Before mentioning some of these, it might be well to briefly

⁹⁷ Ibid. From a footnote on p. 85.

⁹⁸ Repr. in *Form in...* (1922), pp. 206-207. The fact that this view could be republished almost thirty years later seems to indicate Lethaby’s continued belief in its validity. This is the oldest material republished in this, one of Lethaby’s best-known volumes.

⁹⁹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, p. 161, as quoted in Peter Davey’s *Architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (1980), p. 64.

describe, drawing on John Brandon-Jones' 1970 account, the process by which a student would successfully complete an architectural program as sanctioned by the Board.¹⁰⁰ First, the Board required that a student produced satisfactory evidence of (a) a general education and (b) some capacity in drawing. Then the architectural course itself (entailing at least four years' work) could be initiated. The first stage of this was two years of "preliminary" work in a school of architecture, then two years in an architect's office, as pupil or assistant.¹⁰¹ While in the architect's office the student would continue to attend lectures and "do a certain amount of work in his school."¹⁰² Training would be kept under supervision of the R.I.B.A.'s Board for this entire period. At the end of the four years the student produced a study "analogous to the thesis submitted for degrees in certain university courses [degree programs]."¹⁰³ This latter requirement (as described by Brandon-Jones) could involve the examination (i.e. study) of some actual architectural project and an analytical account of the nature and intention of the project.¹⁰⁴ When the study was complete a certificate would be awarded and this would be endorsed by the architect under whom the pupil had served. The Board observed, however, that an architect could not, in its view, be completely trained in four years—that all one could attempt in that time was to try to lay a sound foundation.¹⁰⁵

Concerning the attributes of the program of instruction, one might first mention the emphasis to be placed on construction. Drawing from the 1906-1907 syllabus Brandon-Jones noticed that teaching was to be governed by the principle that "construction is the basis of architecture, and [on] its co-relative

¹⁰⁰Op. cit., pp. 54-55. The details of the process, as with the following discussion of some of the attributes of the program are drawn from John Brandon-Jones' article "After William Morris" (1970).

¹⁰¹Differentiation between the last two terms was not made in Brandon-Jones' discussion of the syllabus.

¹⁰²From the 1906-1907 syllabus as quoted in "After William Morris" (op. cit.), p. 55.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴It is not clear however from Brandon-Jones' article whether the study would involve the student's own design or whether the exercise would be more in the nature of a case study of, perhaps, some other architect's work.

¹⁰⁵"After William Morris," op. cit., p. 55.

principle that architecture is the interpretation of construction into forms of aesthetic value.”¹⁰⁶

Construction, the primary basis of the student’s training, was to be thought of as “the composition of forms and the use of material best adapted to meet a given problem without regard to distinctive styles.”¹⁰⁷ All of this, pro-construction and anti-style, correlated with Lethaby’s individual pronouncements. The phrase about “aesthetic” value, however, seems more the result of the involvement of the other board members. Another feature of the syllabus involves an attempt to learn from older architecture. As a supplement to the practical side of their training (apparently meaning that the following suggestion was not commonly looked upon as “practical”) students should undertake the studies of historic buildings of various periods “so that they would be furnished with materials upon which their minds could work by analogy.”¹⁰⁸ Further, as Brandon-Jones observed:

They [the students] thus would be introduced to forms of proved efficiency and the genesis of these forms in constructional and social conditions would be explained so that they would come to understand that legitimate architectural form is the result of the application of the intelligence to actual and specific problems. The teaching of Design and of the History of Architecture should be undertaken from this point of view, rather than from the point of view of archaeology.¹⁰⁹

The emphasis then, in the utilization of history in the education of the architect was the study of old architecture to learn solutions to problems and not to embrace the methods and aims of the science of archaeology. The Board’s prescription for how to use history in architectural education also seems very compatible with Lethaby’s views.

Another stipulation of the syllabus seems pointed toward the developing aesthetic of modern architecture regarding the eschewal of ornament and also addresses the problem of the “past” in its injunction against the use of past styles. A statement provided that students should be taught to: “...aim at

¹⁰⁶Quoted from the syllabus described in Brandon-Jones’ article “After William Morris,” *op.cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸“After William Morris” (*op. cit.*), p. 55, as quoted from the syllabus by Brandon-Jones.

¹⁰⁹As quoted from the syllabus by Brandon-Jones.

the best practical use of material and at abstract forms without attempting the introduction of ornament. Direct copying of known examples and deliberate attempts to reproduce specific phases of western styles should be discouraged.”¹¹⁰

This all seems consistent with Lethaby’s views. Brandon-Jones, in “After William Morris,” noticed that mathematics and the applied sciences were to be played down in the Board’s proposal; they “were to be included, but limited to the minimum indispensable for practical purposes.”¹¹¹ Brandon-Jones explained this by citing from the syllabus that “the object was to educate the thinking faculties” although how this could be thought to rule out math and science is not clear.¹¹² If this was Lethaby’s personal view, as well as the Board’s, he changed it almost immediately, for he wrote to his friend Cockerell in late 1907: “If I were again learning to be a modern architect I’d eschew taste and design and all that stuff and learn engineering and plenty of mathematics and hard building experience.”¹¹³

Another piece of correspondence from the period touches on another issue—whether design, as part of one’s architectural education can be taught. Lethaby’s friend and mentor Webb seems to have thought Lethaby’s involvement with the R.I.B.A.’s Educational Board involved the giving of advice on how to teach “design.” In a letter to Lethaby in early 1908, Webb proceeded on that assumption and saw some irony (perhaps also inconsistency and/or humor) in it when compared to Lethaby’s point of view expressed at that time in the R.I.B.A. Journal—namely that design could not be taught. Webb commented: “When I read your R.I.B.A. [Journal] story, it seemed to me you were alive to [believed in] the professional position and turned your address into an explanation of why design could not be taught,

¹¹⁰Ibid. As quoted from the syllabus by Brandon-Jones.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid. As quoted from the syllabus by Brandon-Jones.

¹¹³Letter dated October 7, 1907. Published in Meynell’s Friends of a Lifetime (*op. cit.*), p. 130.

and I laughed outright with pleasure that there was [three characters not readable] straight from the elbow for the nose of dullness.”¹¹⁴

In 1906, at about the same time of the appearance of the R.I.B.A.’s syllabus, Lethaby read a paper entitled “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship” to the International Congress of Architects. His views on architectural education expressed there contained his familiar emphasis on “making” and “doing” as opposed to academic education and on the need for architects to have knowledge of the building crafts. On the latter point, however, Lethaby had backed off from his position of 1896 as to the extent to which the architect should become a master of the crafts. But one passage in his congressional address emphasized the importance of craftsmen in architectural education and of knowing how to do the things craftsmen do. This passage, in partial answer to the question Lethaby posed as to the extent to which the architect should receive the practical training of a craftsman, said:

The craftsmanship I have in view is a course of workshop training in masonry and carpentry, so long as they remain the principal factors in construction. So understood, craftsmanship should form the basis of architectural education. The student should at an early time deal less with paper and more with things having weight and volume. I would have him play, if only we could be reasonable enough, with elaborate boxes of wood bricks, and so acquire for himself an instinctive sense of balance in walls and arches. I would have him actually taught to cut stone, to frame up wood, and to handle bricks.¹¹⁵

The preceding seems to suggest that if steel and concrete work became the dominant modes of construction (as in fact they had already in Lethaby’s day) students would learn the skills associated with these. Also referring to the excerpt, it is interesting to note that Lethaby believed that an “instinctive sense” could be acquired. This does not seem to meld too well with his contention that art and design cannot be taught.

¹¹⁴Letter dated March 11, 1908: Webb/Lethaby correspondence in possession of John Brandon-Jones. Lethaby had written in 1891, as mentioned earlier, that art could not be taught.

¹¹⁵Excerpt from the published Proceedings of the International Congress of Architects, London, 1906, as later corrected in pen by Lethaby (Lethaby papers at Barnstaple), pp. 109-110. Lethaby’s idea of architectural students playing with “wood bricks” can, perhaps, be connected to Frank Lloyd Wright’s playing with Froebel wood block sets as a child.

Another passage from the “Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship” paper acknowledged that the architect’s time in training may not permit a thorough learning of a craft but that some involvement, at least, would be beneficial:

Of course the youth, in training for the work of a modern architect, cannot afford much time for such manual practice, and could hardly acquire more than the rudiments of craft knowledge. But surely there cannot be a doubt that practical contact with materials and tools would be of the greatest value in starting him on his way in what must ever be a calling continually dependent upon experiment... An hour’s demonstration in stone-cutting would be better than none at all, and to have worked at it for a month would make the questions of bedding, of tooling, of moulding, and the like ever after have a different significance.¹¹⁶

One more passage from the paper contains the development of another idea—that there is a need for and there should be thought given to training architects for different kinds of architectural practice; the present one-approach method was criticized:

Other [i.e. some] students once having come into close relations with the materials and tools of a builder, would become more and more interested in the practical work of building, and as a result we might hope to train architects of varying gifts and capacities for work of different classes. It is the mistake of all systems to turn out men of one pattern fitted for one and the same end, whereas in the enormous mass of work which modern building comprises it is surely evident that many different aptitudes are needed.

However desirable it may be to train some men to the highest degree of academical skill, administrative ability, and draughtsmanship who may be able to deal with the complicated problems of practice in a big city, it must be remembered that a far vaster volume of building work consists of tasks of a humbler nature, tasks which a highly trained expert is too refined to deal with satisfactorily... I hold it for certain that the more we elaborate (and possibly of necessity elaborate) the education of architects who are to practise within large cities, the more we are making it difficult to supply the everyday needs of the country. I see, then, in a basis of craftsmanship, not only a necessary part of the education of all who are to be architects, but a way of opening out channels for diversities of gifts which may correspond with the diversities of requirement.¹¹⁷

By the beginning of the next decade, the emphasis in architectural education on science and things mechanical, an emphasis missing in the R.I.B.A. syllabus but evident in Lethaby’s letter to Cockerell for

¹¹⁶Ibid, pp. 109-110.

¹¹⁷Ibid. This is the closing statement of the talk.

example, had surfaced in Lethaby's publicly expressed views. In "The Architecture of Adventure," joining "practicality" and "experiment" as primary education emphases is "science": "What I do urge, in the simplest and plainest words, is concentration on practical, experimental, and scientific education. What we most need at the present time is the accumulation of power; we want high mechanical training, wide practical experience, and great geometry."¹¹⁸ In the same work, originally a talk to the R.I.B.A. on April 18, 1910, Lethaby advised emphasizing "reason" in its education work—connecting this, it seems, with engineering concerns, that is, with structures and modern constructive problems. Such topics as vaults, staircase layouts and French railroad stations should be studied, he suggested.¹¹⁹ Archaeology should be de-emphasized; science should be given precedence.

Similarly, the next year, in Architecture, Lethaby advised that architects must be trained as engineers. Architects should study steel and concrete construction, not ancient buildings. In another similar passage, also playing down the value of the past, he urged that those training as architects not study "monuments" but construction, materials and engineering. He called for a more systematic education for architects, but not a more archaeological one.¹²⁰ In 1913, in Lethaby's series "Some Things To Be Done" in The Builder, his advice from 1906 is repeated on the subject of training students for different kinds of architectural practice by recognizing differing student inclinations and abilities in different areas of architectural activity. From the February 14 issue, also in regard to the R.I.B.A. examinations as they might concern the differing architectural strengths of the test-takers in two principal areas, Lethaby wrote:

....the Institute [architects'] examinations [should] provide for a diversity of gifts. In studies going beyond a necessary minimum students may concentrate according to their bent on facility in design, on scientific research, or on scholarship. The hope and intention is that, by thus differentiating the courses much higher attainment in one or other branch will become

¹¹⁸ 1910, as repr, in Form in... (1922), p. 90.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹²⁰ 1911. All foregoing material in this paragraph is from this book, as found in the 1955 ed., *op.cit.*, pp. 191-193. Advice about providing architects with a systematic education also appears on other pages in the same source.

common. What is required is not mere textbooks science or scholarship, but a cultivation of some real gifts until definite power is attained.¹²¹

In 1917, in his talk “Education of the Architect,” Lethaby stressed again the teaching of practical things in an architect’s education, and an emphasis on science, public service, and a common educational experience for those various occupations concerned with building. He told then of his desire that architecture attain “the most exquisite poetic beauty” but said that beauty itself could not be taught. Science, however, could be and art education based on it was required to address modern building problems: “Modern architects have to deal with very complex and technical matters, the building on congested sites of great hotels, railway stations, factories, business premises, and the like, and for this it is clear to me there must be highly organized scientific training.” One could not teach beyond knowledge, he wrote, and those who claimed to be the “priests of mystery architecture” and “talking tall art to Mrs. Jones” did a grave injury to the architectural profession. Also, Lethaby said, a new direction was needed. Architectural education needed to be recast as public service, not the production of “purveyors of whims.” On the subject of an ecumenical training system for those involved in building, he praised Sir Thomas Graham Jackson for his interest in a school of architecture where craftsmen, builders and architects would work together. In this context he also praised the School of Building in Brixton (South London) which had been attempting to pursue this common-training goal.¹²²

Also in his 1917 talk Lethaby mentioned some divisions that might be found in a school’s architectural faculty. These (according to personnel specialties) were defined as:

- (1) expert constructors and planners
- (2) finishers and furnishers
- (3) the experts in old building
- (4) men of business
- (5) county builders and general practitioners

¹²¹*Op. cit.*, p. 206.

¹²²Material in this paragraph is all from “Education of the Architect” talk given May 3, 1917 to a conference of the R.I.B.A., as repr. In *Form in...* (1922), pp. 123-124 and pp. 128-129.

Lethaby said that R.I.B.A. involvement in education should concentrate on the first and last of those just listed. Further, there should be a concentration training students for general practice but also there should be an effort to stimulate specialization beyond the minimum course. Another list summed up what Lethaby said should be the concerns of the R.I.B.A.'s educational policy. Most of the following entries directly reflect Lethaby's familiar concerns for reinforcing architecture's relevancy to society-at-large:

- (1) civilization
- (2) town improvement
- (3) national housing
- (4) quality in building
- (5) cottage types
- (6) preservation of historical buildings
- (7) better public memorials¹²³

Another of Lethaby's writings from 1917, the article "The Spirit of Rome....," previously mentioned (Architectural Review) also stressed attention to societal concerns in architectural teaching: "When things begin again, teaching must be refounded on something deeper than the jargon of the ateliers and their theories of criticism. It must be founded on a sense of public need." In this article Lethaby also underlined the need for consensus as to the approach to be taken in architectural education, of a need "to form some nucleus of opinion as an agreed basis for reasonable teaching."¹²⁴

At the beginning of the next decade, at several places in his 1921 series "Modernism and Design" in The Builder, Lethaby offered advice on architectural training, emphasizing "work," "practicality," "systematic study" and "engineering." In the January 7 installment in the series, in reference to architectural schools, he said: "If production, use, constructions were the aim, if work were put in place of paper-design, the whole tradition would be recast in the interest of all."¹²⁵ The September 2 segment contained more advice, including some about independent study and engineering:

¹²³Ibid, pp. 124-125, 127

¹²⁴Op. cit., Volume XLI, January 1917, p. 4. Lethaby also urged here that consensus be attempted in regard to architectural criticism.

¹²⁵Op. cit., p. 31.

Architectural training should begin with the common, the concrete, and the economic, and good teaching should make all this interesting. If I had to begin again in my mad career, I should set about a systematic study of the humblest commonplaces of building ‘on my own’, and in schools seek to get all the engineering training I could absorb and they would give.¹²⁶

In the October 7 offering, Lethaby observed: “We need methods of instruction which shall be practical from the first day, seek to bring out principles, and open inventiveness and initiative.”¹²⁷ Although he frequently criticized the employment in England of the atelier-oriented way of educating architects that was imported from France, in the “Modernism and Design” series Lethaby wrote that domestic school could learn from that country, especially in regard to planning:

I am sure that we must quite humbly learn the rearranging, organizing and packing skill which has become traditional in the French schools, as a science based on order, geometry and the data of construction and convenience. Our schools have work waiting, about which there can be no dispute and worthy of high ambition, in bringing out the arranging faculty, and constructive power, and a sense of community requirements; if only [our schools] would concentrate on these and turn away from the hollow grandeurs and sham styles.¹²⁸

One contemporary criticism of Lethaby’s views on architectural education as published in the “Modernism and Design” series sarcastically mentioned that Lethaby’s priorities did not pertain to present problems and, further, seemed to say that more stress should be laid on educating the public. In the January 21 edition of The Builder H. Bagenal wrote (regarding what Lethaby had thus far said in the series):

...we are to gather that the young man of to-day must shake themselves, give up thinking and drawing and get interested in building. How admirable this advice would be if it were relevant to our modern difficulties...Does he [Lethaby] not know that the schools, besides providing to the river of mediocre talent always to be found in architecture, and thereby giving it life and movement, have an ever more valuable function, namely of educating public opinion?¹²⁹

¹²⁶Op. cit., Part IX: “Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture,” 2 Sept., 1921, p. 288.

¹²⁷This installment is entitled “Planning Composition and Block-Form,” (Part X, 7 Oct., 1921); quote from p. 450.

¹²⁸Part IV: “French and English Education,” 1 Apr., 1921, p. 410.

¹²⁹“Modern Tendencies and Victorian Criticism—A Reply to Professor Lethaby,” The Builder, 21 June, 1921, p. 92.

Bagenal continued, holding up Americans for comparison to various English architectural groups, in connection with the above-mentioned point:

In America there has been architectural genius of the first order, but there has also been a large number of powerful schools and faculties who have educated public taste and conscience in architecture in a way that has never been done in England either by the Revivalists, by the Norman Shavians, or by the mild animadversions of the Royal Institute R.I.B.A..¹³⁰

Lethaby, however, continued to stress “building,” “construction,” and practical consideration in general in his comments on architectural education. This surfaces at several points in the series he wrote for The Builder two years later, “The Building Art: Theories and Discussion.” In the January 5 segment on this, for example, he advised: “All the time, for far as common sense is permitted, [one should] learn how to build, learn how to be a confident constructor, to go beyond mere routine ‘construction.’”¹³¹ And, in a passage later in the series also criticizing the methods of atelier, Lethaby stated:

Students...may say “yes, but after all, when you have to design, how can you do it except by knowing about a ‘style’ and putting the ‘features’ together into a ‘composition’? That is what we do in our atelier anyhow.” I know that this is so, and all I say is: As much as [possible]... you learn about building, as much as you are permitted look at buildings, and as often as you can consider everyday problems.¹³²

Similarly, at the end of this 1923 series (December 7), Lethaby wrote: “The problem of architecture as it should be presented to the student’s ambition is how to build rain-proof, cold-proof, folly-proof shelters.”¹³³ Also in the December 7 segment, is more on the same tack, coupled with advice to renounce the teaching of aesthetic theory and the “styles” in architectural schools:

The school should turn toward facts, common sense, common service, and structural science and drop the “aesthetic” rhetoric utterly. Such doctrines are hardly now tolerated even in

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Op. cit., Part I, “Architect’s Ambitions,” p. 8.

¹³²Ibid., Part VIII, “The Two Architectures and Education for Building,” 3 Aug., 1923, p. 176.

¹³³Ibid., Part XII, “Words or Realities? And Positive Architecture,” 7 Dec., 1923, p. 891.

schools of “Fine Art,” save in the architectural departments. In such schools they try to teach how to paint and how to model and there is little style talk laid on. So in a school of “architecture” the students should be taught what is known of how to make good buildings and not how they are to slime them over with style “looks.”¹³⁴

In “The Building Art...” series of 1923 also, Lethaby brought up again his belief in instructing those in the building trades and professions in common facilities. Although the idea of a combined training institution for those intending to take up the building arts had already (by this time) been partially implemented, perhaps most significantly with the German Bauhaus (from 1919), there was still nothing as comprehensive as Lethaby intended in these words from late in 1923: “I should like co-education [for architectural students] with builders, engineers, and craftsmen up to a point, so that a youth would form contact with other workers in the same cause and have some choice as to which path would suit him best.”¹³⁵ A passage from another source (Lethaby’s notes for a “Talk to Women’s Institutes”) the same year stressed the importance of links during the training of architects and those engaged in related callings. Here the rationale for common training seems to rest (more narrowly) on the students’ brotherhood as artists: “The education of an architect (or as I prefer to call it for clearness ‘building-director’) should be parallel (so far as he is an artist) to the training of the designer in any other craft, and in the future he will be a graduate of the workshop and the scaffold.”¹³⁶

One other passage from “The Building Art” series might be brought up in the context of the subject under discussion—one offered in an early segment, on a subject not stressed much in previous commentary. This has to do with urging students to be independent in their thinking and to weigh what is being taught before accepting it: “[in learning] there is some margin and percentage left free for our own will and spirit to function in. Learn as a student what the teachers insist on teaching, but with some discrimination; hear the “theory” they expound, but exercise your own mind on the matter: don’t be

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Op. cit., Partially MS, partially TS, p. 4. It should be noted that the passage quoted had been crossed out when viewed by this writer.

browbeaten with mere unintelligibility.”¹³⁷ About the time of “The Building Art” series, probably in 1924, a symposium was held in England with the theme “Architectural Education in the Future.” Lethaby must not have attended this in person, for a letter by him was read at the symposium. An excerpt from it, as reprinted in the R.I.B.A.J again emphasized the importance in architectural education of knowledge of building, of close contact with reality and real objectivity, and the observation that this was not acquired completely through academic channels: “By education we must mean the best possible training in a sound knowledge of fine procedures in building. It is not necessarily attendance for many years at a school. School may doubtless teach many things like planning, geometry, mathematics and drawing, but school education must be supplemented by direct contact with hard material and real problems.”¹³⁸

In the same letter Lethaby wrote of the existence of two main approaches in architecture (from the standpoint of “workmanship” and from the scientific, mathematical “book” point of view). He advised that these two paths must be drawn together; “art and science had to be reintegrated.” The “scientific man” must get shop experience (as much as possible) and the practical craftsman must have “book knowledge.” Joint education is presented as at least a partial solution. He stated (as in earlier comments), that there should be coeducation of architects with builders and engineers.¹³⁹

The ideas of co-education and the desirability of direct contact with the building experience are present the next year (1925) in Lethaby’s series in The Builder on Philip Webb. Here, to reinforce these ideas, Lethaby used the words of Norman Shaw, quoting from an interview with him 1902, adding only a few words at the end to stress that training should be scientific:

‘Imagine some National School of Architecture to which any one connected with building could have access whether he intended to be architect, builder, or craftsman. Let the students have every opportunity of seeing work done and of putting their hand to it. Let there be

¹³⁷Op. cit., 5 Jan., 1923, p. 8.

¹³⁸Mr. H.M. Fletcher read Lethaby’s letter entitled “Architecture, Design, Education.” Printed in the R.I.B.A.J., p. 73. Lethaby stated in the letter that two or three years prior he had tried to draw up a short statement about what was meant by architecture, design, and education. This statement had not been encountered by this author or, if encountered, not identified with the comment just referred to.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 74 for information discussed in the last five sentences.

attached workshops where the process of every handicraft could be demonstrated. The school would, of course, be graduated, and it would not be necessary that every one should go through the whole course. The great thing would be that up to this point all should have been trained without distinction, and that the builders should have associated with those who aimed at higher flights... It is in the workshop that students will get the best part of their training.’

All this, it appears to me, could hardly be bettered, except that the need for definite scientific training such as Webb tried to acquire... is not clearly expressed, but doubtless it is implied...¹⁴⁰

In another passage from this account of Webb Lethaby suggested that architects, at some point in their training, be apprenticed not to other architects, but to builders; this would no doubt ensure exposure to the practical side of things.¹⁴¹ The stress on the practical—again oriented toward extra-mural learning is also found in another passage from Lethaby’s account of Webb:

There are two ways of building—sound work based on craft power or “style-design”—the Webb way; or the win-competition-quick way. If any young student should feel confused at the war of voices, I would say—learn what is taught in the schools while there are schools and you have to go to them; but, as much as you can outside, learn about building and workmanship.¹⁴²

Lethaby’s insistence on the importance of the practical side of architectural education surfaced in the writings near the end of his life as well. From his “Art and the Community” series in The Builder in 1930 can be found: “...all our educational system, with its prizes for drawing and style designing, should be recast to harmonise with some such scheme of practical training, including shop-work.”¹⁴³

Summary—Part I: General Observations

This chapter has included material defining Lethaby’s views on architectural education and placing them in context. A condensed look (as compared with Chapter I) of Lethaby’s own education and

¹⁴⁰As publ. in book form (1935), Philip Webb, p. 83.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁴³Op. cit., Part III, “Aim and Ambitions”, The Builder, March 7, 1920, p. 488.

training, his early schooling in Barnstaple, apprenticeship with Alexander Lauder, further on-the-job training (especially with Shaw), later academic work in the Royal Academy and the effects of his involvement in the activities of the SPAB was provided. Next, Lethaby's professional activities, insofar as they concerned architectural education were discussed, in particular Lethaby's involvement with the London Central School, the Royal College of Art and the R.I.B.A. Then some mention of the vehicles of Lethaby's various public expressions of opinion (articles, addresses) on education was made.

The next four sections moved from the general to the particular in discussing Lethaby's criticisms relating to education and his advice for improvements. The first section offered selected comments by Lethaby about education in general (criticism and advice), then, more specifically, some critical comments and advising statements on art education. Finally, two sections addressed Lethaby's views on architectural education, the first dealing with his negative comments, the second with his positive, prescriptive ones. Regardless of whether architectural education specifically is the subject, or whether the statements concern education in a wider context, a study of Lethaby's writings identifies a number of common concerns. As has been brought out, those include Lethaby's reservations about "book-learning", his urging that education not rely too much on the events of the past, with present production instead the emphasis of education and that student be taught values and purpose to guide them in their later work. Related to this last point, Lethaby's belief that education should be related to service to society—that architects should maintain a close contact with reality and that schools should struggle to avoid becoming entities mainly attuned to their own perpetuation should be reiterated.

Other elements of Lethaby's thinking include, on the negative side, his belief that "art" could not be taught, that present forms of architectural education were too academic and too archaeological and too style-oriented and too unrealistic. Architects in his time, Lethaby believed, were not being educated for service and their training was separated too much from reality. On the positive side, that is, by way of constructive suggestions for improvement, Lethaby urged that architects have a practical side to their training, that architects be trained alongside others intending to take up callings in the building field (and learn each others' crafts to some extent), that architectural education emphasize "making" and "doing,"

and that architectural education programs respond, through the curriculum, to the need to train architects for performance in a variety of different areas of the architecture profession after graduation.

The R.I.B.A. 1907-1907 education syllabus, in the preparation of which Lethaby had a large hand, was discussed and the document's emphasis on construction, on the eschewal of copying and "style-based" activities, and on utilization of knowledge of older architecture (the right kind of knowledge) noted as harmonious with Lethaby's thinking.

It has been pointed out that Lethaby advised that the teaching of theory and of knowledge about styles be omitted in favor of emphasis on production, on acquiring knowledge of building construction and, in later years, also on knowledge of science, engineering and things mechanical. Also Lethaby urged that students question the teaching they received and evaluate its worth. In line with his belief in close ties between the various people involved in the activity of building, he suggested that architects be apprenticed, in some instances, anyway, to builders. Mention was made of Lethaby's listing in 1917 of what he said should be the focus of the R.I.B.A.'s educational concerns. Typically, for Lethaby, these included an orientation towards preparing architects for service to the public (including improvements in national housing) towards concern for historic preservation, towards improving towns and towards the achievement of high quality in architectural work generally. When considering Lethaby's writings from different stages of his life, no notable changes in direction in regard to his views on education seem apparent except that, as previously noted, the emphasis on science, not prominently noticeable as late as 1906 in the writing of the R.I.B.A. syllabus, surfaced as an important factor by about 1910.

Summary—Part II: Characterizations of Lethaby as Teacher

In 1926, George Claussen, in some remarks on art education, offered his assessment of Lethaby as a teacher, especially concerning the latter's involvement with the Royal College of Art. In "Some Aspects of Art Education" he first made two statements relating to contemporary artistic theory: 1) That fitness [appropriateness] was the "road" to beauty and 2) that art is not "an embellishment that may be learned from one or two books." It could not "be put at will on this, that or the other thing." The general

acceptance of these two perceptions, Claussen stated, could be credited to Morris and (perhaps over generously) to the reorganization of the Royal College with Lethaby as Professor of Design. In regard to Lethaby's influence Claussen wrote: "A good many of you have been under Lethaby. I know a good many fellows who have been through the college [the RCA] and whenever I say to any of them, 'who is the man from whom you learned most?' they always [say], 'Lethaby was the man who influence me most.'" Claussen continued, "It was not that Lethaby showed you how to do anything. He just taught you how to think, and that is really the difference, as it seems to me, between bad teaching and good teaching."¹⁴⁴

Later commentary also has recognized Lethaby's influence as a teacher. There is John Brandon-Jones' "The Architect Who Turned Teacher" from 1948 and Posener, in Anfänge des Functionalismus (1964), stated that as a teacher (and philosopher) Lethaby occupied the central place in the later phases of the "English Movement" (the Arts and Crafts Movement).¹⁴⁵ Nikolaus Pevsner, in his chapter "Richard Norman Shaw" in Edwardian Architecture and Its Origins (1975), described Lethaby, in regard to the London Central School, as the "first head of the most progressive of Europe art schools."¹⁴⁶

Lethaby, it is clear from the leadership he exercised in his activities at the London Central School and at the Royal College of Art, in the effective implementation of the aims originating in the education values described in this chapter, produced major changes in architectural education in England. Through additional fora made available to him because of the eminence he achieved in the area of architectural education in England (via publication and addresses) he was able to extend his influence even further. This influence, as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, had important effects abroad, especially in Germany.

¹⁴⁴Op.cit. This address was originally delivered to a society of art teachers and students (perhaps associated with the Royal College of Art) printed in Craftsmen All, Some Readings in Praise of Making and Doing, 1926, p. 15.

¹⁴⁵Posener, op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁴⁶Op. cit., p. 52, Stephen Bayley, writing of Lethaby in 1957 ("W.R. Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition" similarly regarded the Central School as a "radical" undertaking. R.I.B.A.J., April 1975, p. 29.

CHAPTER XIV

NATIONALIST AND INTERNATIONALIST

In the two preceding chapters Lethaby's interest in arousing or heightening the awareness of the general citizenry in regard to urban and environmental concerns, including architectural preservation, was discussed. The interest and effort of the ordinary citizen in improving the quality of urban (and rural) life were important components in Lethaby's solution to urban and environmental problems. He wrote of inhabitants of a particular town or city being aware of their membership in that urban entity—of people having or needing to have a sense of identification with and commitment to that entity. The awareness of the population to preservation concerns and their appreciation of past architecture would help improve urban conditions, Lethaby thought. In his writing, the demographic unit with which a citizen was to identify with was the city, or at other times, a larger body—the nation. This chapter will first offer a few more comments concerning Lethaby's ideas on nationalism, as a component of his architectural theory. Samples from his writing will show Lethaby's participation in the strong impulses of his time toward the expression of a national identity and his belief that a national identity could and should be manifested in the various components of a nation's culture, its architecture, among others.

The second (and larger) province of this chapter is concerned with the extra-national aspects of Lethaby's theory. These aspects include a discussion of “direct” connections, as when Lethaby indicated his awareness of (and approval or disapproval of) viewpoints of foreign writers on architecture and of architectural activity abroad, as well as the “indirect,” as when foreign writers commented on Lethaby's architectural thinking as conveyed through the vehicle of his built work. Direct or indirect, the extra-national aspects treated in this chapter will emphasize connections relating to contemporary architectural work, especially via German architectural writing and activity. America, France, and several other places will also be considered. Connections depending on architecture and/or art of the past are not included. A major aim of the extra-national portion of the chapter is to clarify and discuss Lethaby's particular role in the transmission of English Arts and Crafts ideals to Germany and the subsequent reversal in this current

of influence (after the establishment of the Deutscher Werkbund) from Germany to England. The second major aim is to show Lethaby's awareness of and enthusiasm for architectural and related developments abroad, especially, engineering and urban improvements, and his efforts to persuade his countrymen to learn from these foreign developments.

Nationalism

Writers have at times taken up the question of how and up to what point one can perceive those distinctions in the expression of a culture (through literature, architecture, etc.) which follow from the identification of the characteristics of that expression as a function of a particular geographical, political, or cultural entity. Architectural writers have tried to identify the attributes of, for example, California or German architecture which make that architecture particular to that entity. When Lethaby wrote of preservation, he mentioned the existence of identifiable regional ways of doing things in building, in the working of particular materials for example. He was also interested in questions about how a particular artistic expression might be linked to a particular nation. As to his own country, Lethaby indicated in a comment in 1925 in regard to a church Webb had repaired, that he believed architectural expression, as a function of nationality, was possible. Of Webb's repair work (St. Mary's, East Knoyle, Wiltshire), he wrote: "...all so beautiful because typically pathetically English."¹ Lethaby looked into the architecture of England's past and decided that Gothic was the country's "great national art."² Earlier, in 1911, he presented the Renaissance as essentially a nationalistic movement (of Italy) and because of this, found that it had been (and still was) inappropriate for England to adopt the aims, forms, vocabulary, etc. of

¹ Philip Webb (originally published in 1925 serially in The Builder), as in the 1935 book version, p. 107. (Webb was working on this project in 1890.) Earlier examples, from authors of kindred spirit, include Horace Townsend's remarks in the October, 1893 issue of The Studio (in "The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at the New Gallery, 1893"). He seemed to indicate pride in the "Englishness of the Exhibition" and commented (drawing attention to, as he put it, the "unsullied Anglican purity of inspiration" for the works on exhibit) that "the exhibits are unmistakably English; even a nation so nearly allied in custom and taste as America has not influenced a single example. Modern French art is hardly more felt..." (p. 4).

² Philip Webb, op. cit., p. 65.

Renaissance art.³ Lethaby continued to lobby against the acceptance of “foreign” art ideas in England longer than some of his philosophical soul-mates. Laurence Weaver, usually close to Lethaby’s viewpoint about architecture, cautioned in 1919 against too dogmatic an attitude towards outside influences:

There will always be differences of opinion as to how far external influences should be allowed to affect English building. The idea that local traditions should be followed is sound in principle, but becomes an unreasonable check on invention and variety if driven too far.⁴

In Architecture (1911) Lethaby wrote of the existence of a national “soul” and that the architecture of a nation always mirrored it.⁵ Similarly, in 1917, he referred to the importance of a “national spirit” needed for making towns into successful urban entities.⁶ Lethaby wrote a twenty-four part series in The Builder (1918-1919) entitled “A National Architecture,” but the rhetoric in these writings does not seem to focus on nationalism as a major topic. In 1919, Lethaby lamented in a letter to Reverend Wheatley that there was a lack in England of any kind of commonly-shared awareness of their past: “The people have no national lore or legend, nothing for their hearts to cling to.”⁷ A similar thought was expressed publicly, two years later in his essay “The Town Itself”:

...we are becoming a people who only know novelette and cinema stories; folk-lore, hero-stories, and national legends have almost passed out of the hearts of the people. Now stories form spirit, and this is a quite tremendous matter; nothing I can think of is quite so urgent and foundational as this need of giving us all a common fund of stories to form a folk mind.⁸

³ Architecture, p. 178.

⁴ Small Country Houses of Today, Volume II, p. 115.

⁵ Op. cit., p. 99.

⁶ “Architecture and Modern Life” (1917), repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 108. The importance of nationhood (England’s anyway) was apparently important enough to Lethaby to allow warfare as a legitimate recourse for preserving national identity. He wrote to Sidney Cockerell in 1914, the year WWI began: “I don’t get clear views except the general one that if good wars are defended then every nation defends its wars as good. But not to do so is to lie down and be no nation...” (Dec. 16). From Friends of a Lifetime (op. cit., p. 131).

⁷ Letter in the Collection of R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, Lethaby to Reverend S. Wheatley, January 4, 1919. The next year, in “Architecture as Form in Civilization,” he brought up the notion of contests based on national identities, suggesting the establishment of an international Eisteddfod (repr. in Form in..., 1922, p. 14.)

⁸ Lethaby’s essay was included in Town Theory and Practice, C.B. Purdom, ed., 1921, p. 59.

In 1911 (in *Architecture*) Lethaby wrote that the national soul should work its will in silence (unconsciously?), but sometimes the opposite state, in the form of patriotism, was advocated, as in his comment in 1925 that one owed it to England “to build in a reverent way.”⁹ In “Architectural Education in the Future”, 1924 however, Lethaby set apart old building from modern practices as if to suggest that, although various national (or regional) practices might have been distinguishable in the past, the present situation was different. Now science (universal in nature) was a major factor in building and the character of modern work was now international.¹⁰ This last point parallels the point of view of Bauhaus-related thinkers. It would be fruitless to oppose this change in the character of building circumstance, Lethaby wrote. One might better proceed by focusing on whatever benefits it might promise:

Old building art was essentially different from ours. It was folk custom freely interpreted by little masters who were of the same class as the executants, and it was done for local understanding in local ways. It was often small and shy, yet always showed the human soul. Its essence was craftsmanship. Modern building in cities has to be planned by experts trained in universal science, who order from a distance executants with whom they have little direct contact. Its type is engineering.

One was institutional and immediate, the other is intellectual and international. All attempts to make modern highly organised building resemble the old free craftsmanship are foredoomed to failure; we are fighting against the essence of the thing instead of seeing that and making the best of it.¹¹

References to Foreign Nationalism

Lethaby stated that nationalism in other countries was as an effective force. He usually couched this in positive terms, something for Britain to emulate. German national spirit was noted in particular, especially during and after World War I, but even earlier Lethaby had written to Cockerell on the general effects of German nationalism: “We have no ambition; one sees in Germany that for 30-40 years they have had a clear national ambition to lead in everything. Certainly Berlin is now the culture capital of the

⁹ *Architecture* (op. cit.), p. 186 and *Philip Webb* (op. cit.), p. 127. The subject of patriotism was also brought up in an architectural context a few years later in the series “Architecture as Engineering” (1929, *The Builder*, 8 Feb., p. 301).

¹⁰ Letter to the *R.I.B.A.J.*, 1924, p. 73. With Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple.

¹¹ Ibid.

world.”¹² During the war years, in 1915, a report in the Architectural Association Journal described Lethaby’s thoughts (paraphrased) about the power of the German nationalist spirit as he conveyed these to the Architectural Association:

Many years ago, he [Lethaby] came to the conclusion that Germany was ‘racing’. She was conscientiously dividing up all human activities and knowledge into departments, and definitely setting herself to outstrip all other nations. She brought the Prussian war spirit into every phase of life. Think what it meant that forty years ago the leaders of Prussian power should have met together in one room and decided to enter upon such a campaign.¹³

Next was indicated Lethaby’s lack of sympathy with the limits (or rather the lack of) to which German efforts were carried:

Describing the extremity to which this campaign was carried, Professor Lethaby said the German motto seemed to be ‘everything beyond measure,’ and he thought one of the results of the system must be the drying up of the sources of inspiration. There... seemed to be in the Germans a ‘radical outrageousness.’¹⁴

The 1920s brought additional observations about Germany’s national spirit. In “Housing and Furnishing” (1920) Lethaby mentioned, in regard to preservation, the favorable impact, as evidenced in a German tract he had seen, of existing old works of architecture on the national consciousness.¹⁵ Related, Lethaby thought, was the need for positive national awareness of England’s past, as to be found in a comment in Lethaby’s manuscript “Town Redemption,” written after the beginning of Britain’s involvement in World War I:

¹² September 10, 1911, from Friends of a Lifetime (*op. cit.*), p. 130.

¹³ “Modern German Architecture and What it Means,” 54. (A report on Lethaby’s talk, “Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn From It,” 1915, p. 141).

¹⁴ Ibid. What seems to have been for Lethaby, the negative side of the German national spirit is also mentioned in Lethaby’s manuscript “Town Redemption” (n.d., but probably 1914 or after, probably delivered at Newcastle, as found among Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple). He wrote in the latter that England should build a national spirit but that the Germans had shown the dangers that could accompany this. A report on a talk by Lethaby, printed as “Patriotism and Art Production—the Value of City Rivalries” told of Lethaby’s recognition that the Germans had realized that patriotism required a groundwork on which to build, embodied in such things as love of home, city, and country. (n.d., lecture, page n.a., Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple).

¹⁵ Op. cit., repr. in Form in... (1922) p. 42.

Before the war people used to go to Ober Ammergau to see folk drama. It was really an excuse to get away from Newcastle for they could have had folk drama at home if they had wanted that. Then they went to Bayreuth to hear the German national story, for our national story was not good enough for them.¹⁶

Denmark was also singled out (in 1920, in “Architecture as Form in Civilization”) as instructive in matters relating to the national spirit: “It is in Denmark... that an effort to promote national spirit has been most systematically based on a common knowledge of national traditions, arts, and music, and spread by means of their admirable ‘Folk Schools.’”¹⁷ Presumably this “common knowledge” of the national arts would include architecture. The next year, in “The Town Itself” Lethaby again mentioned how in Denmark, folk schools were formed to bring the “national story back to the people,” but also that America was “full of ‘movements’ of similar kinds...”¹⁸ In 1923, France was also mentioned in some praise given to the author Louis Gillet for his attempting to elucidate the French national tradition: “In a notice in the ‘Revue des Deux Mondes,’ (Nov., 1922) of a new account of French art, by Louis Gillet, being part of a general ‘History of France,’ I noticed these admirable remarks: ‘His purpose is to bring out the national tradition.’”¹⁹

International Connections—Introduction

In the last few paragraphs it was shown how Lethaby could view the development of national sentiment in other countries as an inspiration, or, in the case of the Germans, as a catalyst for preservation and for the encouragement of nationalist feelings in his own country. Lethaby’s thoughts and activities were, however, influenced by contact either directly or through the print media in a number of additional ways. The remainder of this chapter will focus on a discussion of these connections confined, as noted

¹⁶ Op. cit., p. n.a.

¹⁷ Originally publ. in the London Mercury, as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 5.

¹⁸ Town Theory and Practice, C.B. Purdom, ed., p. 61.

¹⁹ “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” The Builder, December 7, 1923. This segment of the series was entitled “Words or Realities? And Positive Architecture.”, p. 891.

earlier, to Lethaby's thinking about the contemporary architectural scene. Some connections have been brought up in previous chapters and will be accorded lesser treatment here.

In Lethaby's personal life and as an independent practicing architect, there were some "foreign connections" with the United States which might be mentioned. Lethaby's wife of many years, Edith, was American (the family name being Crosby). After his wife's death, Edith's sister, Grace (also American) came to care for the architect for a number of years. Another notable connection to the United States involves one of Lethaby's most significant built works—his Church of All Saints at Brockhampton. The church was built on the estate of a Colonel Foster and his wife, and it appears to have been the wife, American by birth, who actually financed the project and dedicated it to her parents who, though probably English by birth, had made their fortune in the United States. Part of the inscription on a marble tablet near the door of the church reads:

This church was built by Madeline Alice Foster in loving memory of Eben N.G. and Julia Jordan, and was consecrated by the Bishop of the Diocese, October 16, 1902.

At the time of the church's opening the local newspaper, The Ross Gazette, credited Mrs. Foster as the church's benefactor, also mentioning that it was a memorial to her parents:

The present and undoubtedly many future generations, will have good cause to remember the generosity displayed by Mrs. A.W. [sic?] Foster to whom the erection is solely due. The cost has been entirely defrayed by that generous and popular lady and the church is a memorial to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jordan.²⁰

²⁰ "Opening of Brockhampton Church," October 23, 1902, p. 3, Col. 4. From a conversation in 1974 with the Church's Vicar Jones, the author learned that Madeline Foster's father had gone to the United States poor but had grown successful financially through the ownership of a chain of stores in Baltimore. His daughter, Madeline, had, according to the Vicar, taken up with a man who did not enjoy her parents approval and, as part of an effort to detach her from the situation, she had been sent on a tour of Europe during which time she met the man eventually to become her husband, the Englishman, Colonel Foster. It is not known by this author whether Madeline Foster's mother was American or not. An earlier article on the Brockhampton Church in The Ross Gazette (June 27, 1901, p. 4) mentioned that Mrs. Foster had previously been the benefactress of "...the splendid operating theatre attached to the Ross College Hospital." This account mentioned that Mrs. Foster laid the foundation stone for the new church at Brockhampton. Mr. Foster, the article reports, also participated—speaking on the occasion of the stone laying.

A posthumous connection to the United States involves Lethaby's first independent commission, the country house as Avon Tyrell. During World War II it had been used, with the estate, as an American battle training school.²¹

Lethaby's travels abroad are discussed in Chapter I, but additional observations are appropriate in this discussion. He made frequent, extensive trips to Europe, beginning in 1879 (at age twenty-two) with one that included Munich. Sketchbooks, among other sources, document his visits to many cities and towns in France. Switzerland had been visited by 1901 and Italy by 1906. Lethaby also visited other parts of Germany as well as Belgium and Hungary among European countries, and Cypress and Turkey (by 1889 and 1893 respectively) on the Continent's fringes.²² Lethaby's travels apparently did not take him to Scandinavia or over the Pyrenees to Spain and Portugal. He apparently visited no other continent although he had commented he would find America interesting.

As a historian of art and architecture, Lethaby clearly did not confine himself to the subject matter of England. Among bound volumes there is his notable monograph of 1894 (co-written with Harold Swainson), The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople, as well as Greek Buildings (1905), and The Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem (1910), with William Harvey and others.²³ The Journal of Hellenic Studies carried at least seven different articles by Lethaby from 1913 to 1930 and The Builder published four more on Greek art topics in addition to at least two on Lycian and on Cretan art.²⁴ In The Builder

²¹ Interview by author December 2, 1974, with Mr. Leonard Pierce, a longtime staff member at "Avon Tyrell."

²² See, especially as sources concerning Lethaby's travels, his sketchbooks at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, London. Miscellaneous indications of foreign influence can be noted in these. In two of the earlier sketchbooks (1884 and 1886 respectively) can be found a drawing of a chair, labeled "New England chair" and an interior perspective sketch labeled "Japanese room." These latter two, of course, do not document travel to the United States and Japan, but do indicate interests in the arts and culture there.

²³ See also Lethaby's "Sancta Sophia" in the Architectural Review, 1905. Robert Weir Schultz edited the book on the Church of the Nativity.

²⁴ Lethaby's offerings in the Journal of Hellenic Studies included "The Sculpture of the Later Temple of Artemis and Ephesus" (1913), "The Nereid Monument Re-Examined" (1915), "Another Note on the Sculpture of the Later Temple of Artemis and Ephesus" (1916), "The Earlier Temple of Artemis and Ephesus" (1917), "The Parthenos" (1917), "Greek Lion Monuments" (1918), and "The West Pedestal of the Parthenon" (1930). In The Builder see "Greek Afternoon at the British Museum" (1920), "Pre-Hellenistic Architecture" (1926), "Parthenon Studies" (1927), "More Greek Studies" (1929), "Lycian Art" (1931), and "The Palace of Minos and Knossos" (1931).

1920s, Lethaby's works on a wider range of topics, including Armenian architecture and Asian and Central American art can also be found.²⁵ Also, in the R.I.B.A.J. such contributions as "Drawings of Greek Architecture at the R.I.B.A." (1912, an exhibition review?) and "An Outline of Armenian Architecture" (1922), a condensation from the notes in French of A. Felvadjon) were made by Lethaby. Throughout his scholarly career, Lethaby consulted works by foreign authors. The earliest works Lethaby used directly were in French, as, for example, the ones consulted in his book Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891).²⁶

Lethaby's international connections also involve issues of architectural preservation, brought out in the preceding chapter. Only a few reminders of this kind of link will be offered here. Lethaby's commentary on foreign preservation activity is important to the study of his thinking. This includes his comments made at the Architectural Conference of 1906, in his talk "The Preservation of Ancient Architecture," in which he criticized recent "restoration" in France, Germany and Italy.²⁷ In later writings, as in "Architecture as Form in Civilization" (1920), Lethaby commented that, with all the destructive "restoration" in England, one would soon have to go to America to experience authentic antiquity.²⁸ As was brought out in the Chapter XII, various foreign personalities, including architectural practitioners and/or writers were singled out by Lethaby for praise or criticism. These included Viollet le Duc in his writing on Philip Webb and Victor Hugo in the earlier "The Preservation of Ancient Architecture."²⁹

²⁵ See, in The Builder, the reviews "Hellenist Art in Ancient America" (1924), "Animal Spirals from Asia to Central America and Northern Britain" (1924), and "The Development of American Architecture, 1785-1830" (1926). Also in The Builder was Lethaby's review of Donald MacKenzie's Myths of Pre-Columbian America (1924, vol. 126, p. 184).

²⁶ Even earlier, one can notice Lethaby's recording of a quote by the French architectural theoretician Durand (1886 sketchbook). Among foreign historians he seems to have had a particularly high regard for his contemporary, the Austrian Strzygowski. (See for example in "Modernism and Design," Part X: "Planning, Composition and Block-Form," The Builder, October 7, 1921, p. 451.)

²⁷ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 237.

²⁸ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 4-5.

²⁹ Originally 1925 article series in The Builder, as found in the 1935 book version Philip Webb, p. 131 and "The Preservation..." (1906), as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 237. The first of these was actually Lethaby quoting Webb (presumably sympathetically).

Contemporary Architecture and its Problems—General

In the contemporary practice of architecture and related disciplines, Lethaby's general concern was that England should not fall behind other countries. In "Design and Industry" (1915), he warned that England should see the value of her own ideas before they were mirrored back from the Continent. His example was the acceptance of English design in Europe, for example, English innovations in furniture, book design and textile and wallpaper patterns. It was abroad that Lethaby observed these English efforts had been adapted to modern machine industry.³⁰ A similar cry for England to challenge other countries for leadership in building was expressed in 1919: "Moreover, we might be the first to become national builders and thus lead the world. I don't want all the thinking and adaptation to be done in America and Germany."³¹ As to the study of architecture, Lethaby wrote in 1921 that it should be done in England, not in Paris or Rome. This presumably was a caution against the academies in those places.³² Earlier, in 1913, he had written that a student could learn much from traveling in Europe and observing the results of certain building activities which Lethaby found praiseworthy:

Another thing to be done, I would suggest, is to introduce a newer form of travelling studentship, or of travelling at one's own will... Observations should be made of the elegance of French construction in iron and steel, the German excellence in roofing and forms of external plastering, the direct and admirable Swiss way of putting lighting conductors to buildings, the general European decision as to the proper colour to paint constructive ironwork...³³

³⁰ Repr. in Form in... (1922), pp. 48-49. Posener, in Anfänge... (1969) took note of the apprehension of Lethaby, that the Continent would reflect back English ideas (p. 72).

³¹ "Observation and Suggestions," Part VIII: "The Beauty of Structures," The Builder, September 5, 1919, p. 239. Similarly, in the manuscript "Town Redemption" (written after 1914), Lethaby wrote that England must keep up with what is being done in Europe and America. (n.d. avail.)

³² "Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture," The Builder, September 2, 1921, p. 288. Le Corbusier made similar critical comments about the academic approach (especially about studying in Rome) at about the same time in Vers Une Architecture (1923); originally appearing earlier, in 1920-21, in L'Esprit Nouveau.

³³ "Some Things to be Done," The Builder, February 14, 1913, p. 206 (repr. from Lethaby's talk at a meeting at the Architectural Association).

Lethaby wrote complainingly in 1921 in The Builder, of the current English enthusiasm for English Renaissance forms. These, he said were no better than recent stylistic borrowings from abroad, including the derivations from the recent work of American architects, McKim Mead and White:

What architects have decided this? [i.e. that the English Renaissance “style” forms would hold sway] ...I thought that in educational circles there had been at least four very recent ‘decisions’ for the French atelier ‘style’ for the Cockerell ‘Greek style’...for the Palladian ‘style’, and for the ‘Roman Classic style’ [to which I would now add the Mc Kim Mead and White style].³⁴

He continued, accusing England alone as being mired in style-based architecture:

Does this decision apply to all civilized countries? Is Berlin to build according to the English style forms of the eighteenth century? And America and France? Of course, the answer must be only England; but this is a very serious limitation on the decision of the architects and opens up disturbing questions, as: May we be allowed to look over the hedge of our insularity at what the others do?³⁵

Two years later, also in The Builder, Lethaby’s concern was directed at the danger that England might inappropriately borrow from abroad for contemporary work:

There is even danger that the phrase “reasonable building,” or any other would be caught up as the denomination of a style, and that instead of trying to build reasonable buildings we shall set about “designing” in what was called “the reasonable style” based on “composing” borrowings from Holland, Germany, and America. We have already made the word modernist mean absurdity, and are quite equal to making reasonable mean imbecility.³⁶

In his biographical series on Webb of 1925, in reviewing the course of architectural events of recent times Lethaby mentioned the nineteenth century’s “Battle of the Styles.” Following that, he said, was a hint of

³⁴ “Modernism and Design,” Part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice”, December 2, 1921, p. 749. Second set of brackets in the quote are Lethaby’s.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 749.

³⁶ “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” Part VIII: “The Two Architectures and Education for Building”, The Builder, August 3, 1923, p. 178. Although he must have had something quite different in mind at an earlier point in time, Webb wrote to Lethaby in 1907, drawing his impressions from recent books, that a “crude modernism” that had appeared in the architecture of Rome since his last visit there in 1885. (Letter of June 28, 1907, in possession of John Brandon-Jones.) Perhaps this use of the word modern, as opposed to Lethaby’s, meant inferior rendition in the classical styles, considering the city referred to and the point in time.

promise but by the start of the twentieth century, the Neo-Classical Revival had bloomed and English architects “set themselves to copy Paris and New York.”³⁷ In “Architecture as Structural Geometry” (1929), he scorned copying styles’ from abroad, be they historically-based or the results of foreign astylar design:

At the present moment I can only discern three working theories for architectural design in England: (1) Let us go on with the sham styles and say as little as possible about any principles: ‘Let us eat, drink and be merry...’ (2) Baroque is a blessed sounding word which is being made much of in Germany and that would be something to copy. (3) Watch what is being done in Scandinavia and America and imitate the ‘style’ of their results. We must have a style to copy...³⁸

In 1927, a letter to Harry Peach, Lethaby offered his opinion on contemporary work in the Netherlands and Germany, although it is not clear what he is referring to here since he is known to have liked some modern German work of his time: “...another kind of art design...these German and Holland art styles I hate em.”³⁹ Perhaps the foregoing was directed, in regard to the Netherlands, at de Stijl work (for example, the work of Rietveld and the architectural conceptions of Van Doesburg) which he may have thought did not represent and approach to design based on “harsh science.”

Lethaby’s comments from 1930 show a continuing protest against borrowing ‘styles’ from abroad, whether they be “modern” or “historical.” On the former, he wrote:

There are rumours at the present time of things being done in France, Germany, Sweden and America, and there is some fear of our being swept along in another style ‘movement.’ I greatly fear a modernist fashion which will be imported as a style and not arise as a natural growth from our own sound building customs.⁴⁰

³⁷ Op cit. p. 65.

³⁸ “Architecture as Structural Geometry,” The Builder, (Jan. 11, 1929), p. 52.

³⁹ Letter from Lethaby to Peach, June 14, 1927. (R.I.B.A. Collection)

⁴⁰ “Art and the Community,” Part II: “Design and Structure,” The Builder, February 7, 1930, p. 310. A similar comment about copying modern work from other countries, that is, work with which Lethaby did not sympathize, is found in his typescript at Barnstaple, “Renaissance and Modern”: “Copying eccentricities from Scandinavia, Germany, and France, and adding stone-age forms of sculpture only produces another kind of sham style.” An earlier reference in this latter text indicates that the derisive comment about stone-age sculpture may be linked to Cubism or to developments in abstract art in general. (pp. 6 and 5.)

As for “historical” or perhaps a mixture of that with other ingredients, depending on what Lethaby meant by his reference to America, Lethaby said: “In front of what we are pleased to call architecture it is just the same—so much Greek from the books; so much French atelier smell; so much American look.”⁴¹

Germany

On the subject of contemporary architecture, the links between Lethaby and Germany are the most significant ones involving a foreign country as to both his activities and thought. Germany is mentioned often in Lethaby’s various writings on contemporary architecture, and once, in 1915, he devoted an address completely to modern German architecture, “Modern German Architecture and What we May Learn from It.”⁴² Basil Ward reported that Lethaby had visited Germany by 1900 and by 1909 may have had sufficient mastery of the German language to review a book written in German.⁴³ Before discussing Lethaby’s written commentary concerning Germany, one other general connection might be mentioned—that Lethaby was familiar with the work of the renowned aesthetician Wilhelm Worringer by 1928 as he referred to him in his series “Architecture, Nature and Magic,” published in *The Builder* that year. A letter from Harry Peach to Lethaby that year refers to Lethaby’s interest in Worringer also.⁴⁴

Negative Comments about Germany

Lethaby’s comments about Germany are generally favorable but occasionally the opposite would surface. In his generally positive commentary in “Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn

⁴¹ “Art and the Community,” Part III: “Aims and Ambitions,” *The Builder*, March 7, 1930, p. 487.

⁴² Delivered at the Architectural Association, January 1915. A discussion of Lethaby’s talk was published the next month (on February 3) in the *A.A. Journal* (then called the *Architects’ and Builders’ Journal*.) under the title “Modern German Architecture and What it Means.” *The British Architect* (February 5, 1915) also reported on the talk.

⁴³ See Ward’s “W.R. Lethaby” in *Design* (July, 1957) p. 45. Lethaby’s review of Moritz Meurer’s *Vergleichende formen lehre des ornamentals und der pflanze*, Dresden, 1909, was published in the *R.I.B.A.J.*, June 12 of that year (pp. 540-554). (Meurer’s dates are 1839-1916.)

⁴⁴ As in the 1956 book version, *Architecture, Nature and Magic* (op. cit.) p. 146. Peach’s letter to Lethaby is from June 4, 1928. Peach had been, however, sending Lethaby *translated* Werkbund articles by late 1915, although copies in English may have been provided merely to *facilitate* reading them. It seems unlikely that Lethaby would have had the Meurer book translated in order to review it. Worringer’s most well-known work, *Abstraction and Empathy* was written quite a bit earlier (c. 1906), and first published in 1908.

From It” (1915) he did describe Germany as a society of excesses.⁴⁵ A few years later in “What Shall we Call Beautiful” (1918) he questioned some directions in aesthetics which had German connections. He quoted Clutton-Brock’s The Ultimate Belief (1916) in the view that aesthetic value was distinct from moral or intellectual judgment. Lethaby said this view, with which he disagreed, was a return to the German doctrine of “Art for Art’s Sake.”⁴⁶ In the same work, theories of aesthetics based on a priori systems were questioned—theories developed by “word-philosophers,” who, Lethaby said, knew little or nothing of art and who “argued down from the pure idea.” A German thinker, Baumgarten, was offered as someone who proceeded in this way.⁴⁷

Positive Comments

Positive general comments by Lethaby about Germany are found in “Modern German Architecture...,” in that Germany as a nation was then (in 1915) conscious of competing with other nations in all fields and had studied ideas from every quarter, correcting mistakes they found in these ideas and synthesizing the good aspects.⁴⁸ In “Town Redemption,” a manuscript of about the same date, he wrote in praise of Germany: “If the ideals of nations and communities were only sorted out and put on the table so many other things, as the Germans saw, would fall into place.”⁴⁹ Germany’s educational methods were also praised: “...in Germany for generations groups of students have worked around a professor in doing”, Lethaby wrote to Harry Peach.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ As repr. in Form in..., p. 98.

⁴⁶ “What Shall We Call Beautiful”, orig. publ. in The Hibbert Journal (Apri, 1918). as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 159.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 165.

⁴⁸ Op. cit. As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 98. In Scripts and Scraps (op. cit.), Powell summarized in his introduction some thoughts of Lethaby’s along a similar line. Perhaps this was derived from “Modern German Architecture...”: “Then he compared our not grasping any central idea of life in England and working consumedly for that, to the Germans, with their idea of world might, which for the last many years they have deliberately bred into their people.” (p. 8).

⁴⁹ Op. cit., n.p. available.

⁵⁰ Lethaby/Peach correspondence (n.d.), R.I.B.A. Collection.

English Influence on Germany Through Muthesius

The English Arts and Crafts Movement has been identified as a major influence on German architectural developments in the first decade of the twentieth century. Lethaby acknowledged this in the essay “Art and Workmanship” (1913) and noted that the Germans realized the importance of the English movement from an economic viewpoint.⁵¹

The German architect and architectural writer, Herman Muthesius, (later founder of the Deutscher Werkbund) was the prime vehicle for transmission of information about the English Arts and Crafts to Germany. As Lethaby himself pointed out in “Modern German Architecture...” (1915), Muthesius, an “expert architect,” was attached to the German Embassy in London for five or six years (from about 1900) and became a historian of English “free architecture.”⁵² Service, in Edwardian Architecture and Its Origins, has dated Muthesius’ appearance in London as beginning in 1896 and has stated that his tenure was seven years.⁵³ Service has mentioned that Muthesius was already an architect before coming to London, and has stated that he soon got in touch with Lethaby.⁵⁴ This may mean that Lethaby met Muthesius before he visited Germany. Noel Rooke, in his article “The Works of Lethaby, Webb and Morris” (March, 1950, R.I.B.A.J.), credited Muthesius for the exportation of Lethaby’s ideas. Impressed with the London Central School of Arts and Crafts (at the time Lethaby was its head) Muthesius called it “probably the best organized contemporary art school.”⁵⁵ As the Architect’s and Builder’s Journal reported on Lethaby’s talk “Modern German Architecture...”: “All the architectural work of the time in

⁵¹ Orig. publ. in The Imprint, as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 208. The article was, in fact, also published in German three years later, with a new title (see Peach/Lethaby correspondence at R.I.B.A.).

⁵² Op. cit., as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 99. Muthesius was not the only German who contacted Lethaby around this time. In a letter to Cockerell (July 1, 1907) Lethaby mentioned advising a German woman who was writing an account of Ruskin that she ought to visit him (Lethaby letters at the British Museum).

⁵³ Op. cit., p. 5. (The same dates are given in Hatje, Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture, 1964, (in English), paperback, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., p. 202.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Stuart Macdonald, in The History and Philosophy of Art Education, 1970, pp. 297-298, mentioned this. (Originally publ. in Nikolas Pevsner’s Academics of Art (1940).

England was investigated and tabulated after the German manner.”⁵⁶ Lethaby had continued, as paraphrased in the journal, to say: “Then, just as English ‘free’ architecture had arrived, there was a reaction, and the re-emergence of what he would call the catalogue style.”⁵⁷ Further transmitted in the account of Lethaby’s talk, the journal reported:

In the meantime the Germans had been quick to seize upon the best that was in English arts and crafts, and their advance in industrial design was founded on English models, while our own Press and critics set about to kill the whole thing; it simply withered out here, and took itself to Germany. Germany pursues the arts and crafts experiment which we employed critics to destroy. She fostered an architecture that could develop in its own sphere, and was not like us, for ever casting back to disguise it in skins that it had long shed.⁵⁸

It is interesting to compare this account by Lethaby with that, equally candid and similar in context, offered two years later by Lethaby’s countryman and arts and crafts colleague C.R. Ashbee. First, Ashbee’s characterization of the nature of the Arts and Crafts Movement, its aims and final effect in England can be noticed:

The working craftsmen, said they, [the leaders of the movement in the 1880’s]...the man who could make beautiful things with his hands was down-trodden; give him a chance, he would make beautiful things again. Talent only needed to be brought to light...let the craftsman be his own designer, let there be no more ‘ghost work,’ no more sham Art produced in factories. There was a great want for the beautiful and simple products of the hand again; and if a society, “The Arts and Crafts Society,’ could only be formed having this principle, it would revolutionize Modern Industry.

The society was formed—it did not revolutionize Industry.⁵⁹

Ashbee continued, in 1917, saying that Arts and Crafts societies were found not only in England but in Europe and America, one of the most successful being in Boston, Massachusetts.” The “most logical and

⁵⁶ “A Discussion on Modern German Architecture”, February 3, 1915, p. 54.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid. MacDonald, *op. cit.* has commented that by 1914, the architectural initiative had been lost to Germany and mentioned Lethaby’s and Ashbee’s observations about this. (p. 314)

⁵⁹ Where the Great City Stands (1917), p. 11.

consistent development” of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Ashbee wrote, were the coordinated workshops of Munich and Vienna. In England, the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement on architecture, Ashbee observed, did not go as far as in Germany or Belgium: “...in England the movement hesitated, halted, and broke down for want of effective organization.” Thus both Lethaby and Ashbee wrote the epitaph for the Arts and Crafts Movement in England during the years of World War I. Ashbee observed that the movement in England had “left a few fine examples” and cited the work of Lethaby along with the works of Edwin Lutyens, and E.S. Prior, Detmar Blow, Halsey Ricardo, Charles Holden, Cecil Brewer, and one or two others. Ashbee’s view of the Arts and Crafts Movement’s demise in England was filled out with a comparison to France, Germany and the United States in which English deficiencies were emphasized: “English building, indeed, was burdened with too many difficulties. It had no traditional style as in France, it had no sound organization as in Germany, it had few of the great opportunities given it by intelligent ‘big business’ as in America...”⁶⁰

If the Arts and Crafts movement waned in England, Muthesius, through publications on English architecture, found good use for what had been done. That information acted as a catalyst to similar impulses in Germany. About four years after arriving in England Muthesius wrote (on contemporary English secular building) Die englische baukunst der gegenwart—Beispiele neuer Englischer profan bauten and a year later, on recent English Churches, Die Neuere Kirchliche baukunst in England.⁶¹ In Die Neuere Kirchliche baukunst three of Shaw’s works and a baptismal font cover by Lethaby were illustrated. The work of other architects close to Lethaby—J.F. Bentley, Leonard Stokes, G.F. Bodley and J.D. Sedding were discussed in this book also.⁶² After Muthesius’ return to Germany to resume permanent residence in 1903, Das Moderne Landhaus und seine innere ausstattung was produced (1905). This work

⁶⁰ All material in this paragraph from the 1917 Ashbee book just cited, pp. 11 and 19.

⁶¹ Leipzig, 1900 and Berlin, 1901 respectively. The earlier work was produced in four portfolios.

⁶² The publication date of this second work may be 1902 or this may be a later edition. The church at Richard’s Castle, Shropshire (two illustrations), the one in Swanscombe (one illustration) and the Mission Church on Latimer Road, London, with which Lethaby was probably involved, were the works by Shaw which were covered. For the last named, a section and an evaluation were provided.

dealt with an international selection of buildings but England was represented by a number of works by architects close to Lethaby, including Ernest Newton, who had been chief draftsman for Shaw before Lethaby, and Cecil Brewer.⁶³ Muthesius' Landhaus und Garten, pan-national in content, was published in 1910. Coverage of Arts and Crafts work by Baillie-Scott and Mackmurdo were also among those prominent designers included with the work of such German, Austrian and Finnish designers as Behrens, Olbrich, Riemerschmid, Hoffman, Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen. This book was before the third and final volume of his most influential writing effort (insofar as English architecture is concerned)—Das Englische Haus. Volume I of Das Englische Haus had been published in 1904 (with a second edition in 1908); Volume II came in 1910 and Volume III in 1911.⁶⁴ The first volume included works of several English Arts and Crafts architects and some closely allied. Among the older English architects and artists mentioned were Shaw, Webb, Prior and Nesfield, Crane, Morris, and Burne-Jones.⁶⁵ In a section dedicated to the works of “younger” English (and Scottish) architects, mention was made of Lethaby, Newton, Stokes, Townsend, Baillie-Scott, Cave, Brewer, Mackintosh, Voysey, Wood, Macartney, (S.) Barnsley, and Lutyens. Lethaby received the largest coverage in terms of illustrations and they were all of Avon Tyrell.⁶⁶ Thus Lethaby, his teachers, colleagues and disciples appeared in a widely-read work by Muthesius a few years before he founded the Deutscher Werkbund in 1907.

Two years later in Volume II of Das Englische Haus, Shaw received the most coverage, via illustrations, among the older architects, and Voysey among the younger. Representing other architects

⁶³ German periodicals of the time were also carrying material on English architecture, including that of the Arts and Crafts-oriented designers. Moderne bauformen, in 1905, for example, illustrated Lutyens' “Berrydown.”

⁶⁴ The English translation combined all three volumes. This English version stated, perhaps mistakenly, that the original set of three came out in 1904-1905, with second edition in 1908-1911. The English translation, based on second edition, omitted the exterior view of of Lethaby's “Four Oaks” and also the attendant commentary.

⁶⁵ A plan of Shaw's country house “Adcote,” Shropshire of 1875 was included (as well as an interior view of the galley), a plan of “Dawpool,” Cheshire (1880), and perspective views and plans of the houses Shaw designed for Bedford Park in 1880 (single houses and duplexes).

⁶⁶ The Avon Tyrell illustrations included one plan, three external views (two of the garden side and one of the entry court) and two interior views (the drawing room and the main hall). An illustration of London's Boundary Estate Worker's Housing was credited to Thomas Blashill.

close to Lethaby were Baillie-Scott and Prior with two illustrations each and Lutyens, Blow, and Cave with one. Lethaby himself was represented much less comprehensively than in the earlier volume, in this only one perspective view of “Four Oaks.”⁶⁷ The next year, an interior view of “Four Oaks” represented Lethaby and among others, works by Shaw, Baillie-Scott, Voysey, Mackintosh, and Ashbee.⁶⁸

Muthesius’ most interesting comments on Lethaby come in the first volume of Das Englische Haus. There he characterized Lethaby as being pre-eminent among pupils of Norman Shaw, whose own importance for Muthesius is also clear from the amount of coverage accorded and explained why the Continental architectural world might not be familiar with Lethaby: “Among the pupils of Norman Shaw, William Richmond [sic] Lethaby is unquestionably the one to mention. He has remained fairly unknown because he has a great antipathy for advertising, and idiosyncrasy that he shares with other members of the Arts and Crafts Society.”⁶⁹ Lethaby was singled out for his contribution to domestic architecture in his country: “...he is one of those who has in hand the best tradition of England house building.” Muthesius was attracted to the austerity (in the sense of reluctance to use meaningless detail) in Lethaby’s work, as forward-looking. His work Muthesius said, was “in the best sense modern in thought... and certainly rejects every Romantic incrustation...” He wrote also of Lethaby’s ability to cast a certain kind of “aesthetic spiritualism” which drew the spectator into his works. Lethaby’s houses, Muthesius observed, were not many in number but each shone as a masterpiece.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ However, Shaw’s works, including some of which Lethaby had participated in planning, included “Dawpool,” Cheshire (interior view); “Sunninghill” (exterior perspective and two plans); “Alderbrook,” Cranleigh, Surrey (two floor plans); Lowther Lodge (three plans), a Row House at 68 Cadogan Square, London (plans); a row house in Chelsea (perspective view and plan); Albert Hall Mansions (exterior perspective view and sections; The Alliance Insurance Company, Pall Mall London (plan); and “The Hallams,” Surrey (two elevations). Blow’s house “Happisburgh,” Surrey (from the 1908 ed.) was shown in front view.

⁶⁸ Shaw was represented by a fireplace detail from the Picture Gallery at “Dawpool”; two illustrations of Voysey’s work were included, one for each of the others mentioned.

⁶⁹ Op. cit., 2nd edition, Volume I, 1908, p. 151. Lethaby had remarked on this same quality in his mentor, Philip Webb, in his biographical study of him in 1925.

⁷⁰ Ibid. (For the material in the last five sentences of this paragraph.)

The most “pure” example of Lethaby’s built work was the country house at Avon Tyrell, according to Muthesius. Describing the external appearance of this building (after referring to the included illustrations) a number of complimentary adjectives are employed: “...the entrance-front appears earnest and austere, the garden façade so lively and inviting with its terrace spreading out before it, and, from the dark brick work of the façade, the three white bays protruding.” As for the interior, Muthesius placed emphasis on a perceived warm, domestic feeling, on the reticence in detail and the appeal of legitimate craftsmanship: “In the interior, is there not an aspiration to a calm comfort, decorative ornament...only utilized on the ceilings and walls [and then only] in the form of genuine hard stucco, in which color is renounced,...carpet, walls and ceiling shine in modest white.”⁷¹ Singling out the fireplaces especially, Muthesius continued to emphasize restraint as a virtue and the down-to-earth, direct qualities of the work: “[They] are built by Lethaby utilizing straight-forward polished marble expanses... The form show great reservation overall, all of his works have the most austere work-character.”⁷² Later, in Volume II, Muthesius commented on the unassuming quality of English Arts and Crafts houses in general, and in doing so, referred the reader to Lethaby’s “Four Oaks” near Birmingham. A lack of pretense was the best quality of the new type of English house, Muthesius wrote, “the product of a people sparing of words... who could convey such a virtue in their architecture,” having the qualities “true and open.” He again referred to “Four Oaks” (which is illustrated on the same page) saying that he found its forms “subdued.”⁷³

Muthesius also commented in this passage on the relationship of current English (Arts and Crafts) residential work to the English vernacular tradition (Volksbaukunst). The simple feeling of the vernacular

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 152.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Volume II, p. 170.

he wrote, has been re-captured and combined in the new.⁷⁴ In Volume I, Muthesius also called attention to Lethaby's importance as a teacher; perhaps wishing to acknowledge a debt in regard to his own recently founded Werkbund. He wrote in 1908 that Lethaby was more influential in the development of the Arts and Crafts overall—especially as Director of the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. This institution, which Lethaby headed from its founding up until the year past, was a “landmark” in the history of workshop organizations. Muthesius did not directly refer to the school's impact on the Continent but did stress the leadership it had given to similar organizations in England.⁷⁵

The Design and Industries Association—Influences of Germany on England

Directly related to his contact with English Arts and Crafts architecture and institutions was Muthesius' founding of the Deutscher Werkbund in 1907. This organization sought to lend support to the craftsman, to achieve higher quality in crafts and to bring about the coordinated and interdependent improvement in quality of industrialized products. It was preceded by a number of related “workshop” organizations which, however, had not achieved significant influence in the field of industrial products. The Werkbund in Germany organizationally aspired to more potency as a league or alliance than was possible as a workshop or crafts organization. It was followed by similar organizations, such as the Austrian Werkbund (1910) and the Swiss Werkbund (1913). The Swedish Slojdsforening also evolved into a Werkbund-type organization between 1910-1917.

With the materialization of these Werkbunds and their impact on international trade, the “flow” of Anglo-German influence in the arts became reversed. English acceptance of Deutscher Werkbund results led to the establishment of a domestic organization patterned after it, the Design and Industries

⁷⁴ Ibid. This last passage as originally stated: “Diese Eigenschaften sind das Vermächtnis der alten englischen Volksbaukunst, deren wiedererobertes schlichtes Empfinden sich mit der heutigen Gesinnung zu demjenigen Kunstcharakter vermählt hat, der das heutige englische Hause auszeichnet.” This could be translated as: “These characteristics are a legacy of the old English folk architecture. Its rediscovered sensitivity combined with today's ways of thinking has resulted in the specific artistic character which defines the current English house.”

⁷⁵ *Das Englische...* (Volume I), 1908, ed. p. 152. Lethaby resigned from the Central School in 1911 according to Martin, *op.cit.*, p. 138 (Chronological Index).

Association (D.I.A.), founded in 1915.⁷⁶ Lethaby, who had shifted enough in his philosophy to support efforts to improve industrial products, was one of the founders. Lethaby's friend, Harry Peach, a guiding figure of the D.I.A., seems to have been a major factor in supplying Lethaby (via letters from Germany) with material which heightened his interest in current Deutscher Werkbund activities and in contemporary German architecture. Peach later reported in an address (memorializing Lethaby) to the Art Workers Guild in 1932: "Just before the First World War—Ambrose Heal, Cecil Brewer, and myself went to Germany to see the Werkbund Exhibition, Messel's Museum at Darnstadt and the new shop architecture."⁷⁷

Lethaby wrote the 1915 proposal to found the D.I.A.—which shows his personal role in responding to German Werkbund activity and this was accompanied the same year by his "tribute" to Germany, "Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn From It." Germany is the focus in still another writing the same year, his talk "Political Economy or Productive Economy," given before the Arts and Crafts Society in November. In Germany, interest in this English prospectus is shown by its translation arranged by the German industrialist Peter Bruckmann, a supporter of Muthesius and the goals of the Werkbund since 1907.⁷⁸ Lethaby asserted in his proposal that the recent developments in German

⁷⁶ Posener, *op. cit.*, p. 12 characterized the D.I.A. as an English "answer" to the Deutscher Werkbund.

⁷⁷ Transcript at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection of "A Short Address given at the Art Workers Guild Memorial Evening, April 28, 1932," also entitled "W.R. Lethaby" (p. 3.) Lethaby might have been interested in Peach's comments on Alfred Messel's work because of the latter's reputation for pursuing a more "traditional" approach to "form" (but without recourse to historicizing) instead of one radically "modern." Messel (1853-1909) was a dominant figure in Berlin architectural circles around the turn of the century and had been A.E.G.'s chief designer before Behrens. His Wertheim Department Store (Berlin, 1896-99) showed an inclination, considered progressive at the time, to utilize the newer construction materials—as in the large use of exposed metal and glass in the store's façade. (The store no longer exists). Architects Brewer and Heal were also close to Lethaby. Brewer, at one time a partner with Heal and a member of the A.W.G., was also connected with the D.I.A. His Arts and Crafts design approach, and the influence of Lethaby is shown in his design with Dunbar Smith for the Mary Ward Settlement House (1895), London. One might also mention that Lawrence Weaver (b. after 1876-d. 1933), architectural editor of *Country Life* and a supporter of Lethaby, was once President of the D.I.A., (after H.S. Goodhart-Rendell).

⁷⁸ The German translation appeared the next year as the pamphlet *Kunst und Industrie in Englands Kunst-industrie und der Deutscher Werkbund*.

industrial design had been founded on a “minute study” of the English Arts and Crafts Movement.⁷⁹ He mentioned the effects abroad of recent English design contributions but asserted that English industry should themselves wake up to the potential of these and apply them to mass products rather than witness Continental organizations doing this: “...the large manufacturer [here in Britain] has not seen what great possibilities there were adapting these experiments to the large world of machine industry. Now this is just what our foreign competition have done.”⁸⁰ The same year, in “Political Economy or Productive Economy” he claimed (off by perhaps two years with his dates) that in about 1909: “it was decided in Germany to adapt the English Arts and Crafts to their machine industries, as so the Werkbund was formed, which in marvelously quick time has brought a commercially captivating type of design into vogue.”⁸¹ This last phrase regarding the resulting German product as distinct from their method, was not meant to be complimentary and he added: “Personally I hate it, but it was not meant for me.”⁸²

Besides the interaction of Muthesius and Lethaby, and Bruckmann’s acquaintanceship with Lethaby’s writing, Lethaby was aware of Friedrich Naumann, a politician of importance in Germany around World War I. Naumann showed an early interest in the machine and its potential for social improvement. His article of 1904 in Kunstwart, “Die Kunst im Zeitalter der Maschine,” showed enthusiasm about the liberating possibilities of iron construction and Naumann praised utilitarian

⁷⁹ “Design and Industry,” as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 53. Lethaby also commented on the Germans being influenced by the English Arts and Crafts in an undated letter to Peach. (At R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection.)

⁸⁰ As quoted in “After William Morris,” Artifex, 1970 by John Brandon-Jones, p. 56. Originally in Lethaby’s “Design and Industry...” (1915). Similarly in “Modern German Architecture...” (1915) Lethaby wrote that the first thing England should learn from Germany is to appreciate English originality. Referring to the Arts and Crafts, he wrote that “a remarkable development in English art had recently taken place up to about 1895” (Reprinted in Form in... (1922), p. 99). Later German acceptance of things English may have been less wholehearted judging by a letter from Peach to Lethaby in 1927 discussing German criticism of a recent D.I.A. exhibition in Leipzig. Peach wrote to Lethaby that he thought German design at this time was too wild but praised their experimentation with materials, then concrete blocks. (R.I.B.A. Collection, May 27 letter)

⁸¹ Op. cit., as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 197. Similarly in “Modern German Architecture...” (1915) Lethaby wrote that German advances in industrial design were founded on the English Arts and Crafts. (as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 100.)

⁸² Ibid

structures like market halls and railway stations (as well as ships and bridges) as “our new buildings.”⁸³

Peach had written Lethaby in early 1916 regarding one of Naumann’s addresses—possibly his earlier

“Werkbund und Weltwirtschaft” given at the important 1914 Werkbund exhibition in Cologne—and

Lethaby, judging by his reaction upon receiving an article by Naumann from Peach, thought favorably of

him.⁸⁴ In “Political Economy or Productive Economy” (1915), Lethaby described Naumann in a different

capacity, as one of the most able modern economists and noted his interest in the ideals of the

Werkbund.⁸⁵ The same year, in “Modern German Architecture...” Lethaby pointed out that German

political economists took product quality into account and that English economists should do the same.⁸⁶

In “Political Economy...” Lethaby mentioned his meeting with an Austrian economist who had sought

him out and related to him that in Germany the Arts and Crafts “now form...a well-defined branch of

political science.”⁸⁷ Lethaby complained in this same address that no English economist considered the

Arts and Crafts in his thinking—“Our economist is probably engaged in some abstract theory in ‘pure’

economics or ‘coefficient of value’ without having any more idea about the value of design than a cat.”⁸⁸

Lethaby wrote of the Austrian’s disappointment in visiting England to find:

...the untidy streets, miserable railway stations, inefficient architecture...entirely different from what he had been led to expect from the fame of the Arts and Crafts which he had come to expect. ‘How is it,’ he said, ‘that you, who had it all twenty years ago [c. 1895?], are now rejecting the Arts and Crafts?’⁸⁹

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, xvii, paragraph 2, p. 323. (As quoted in Nikolaus Pevsner’s *Pioneers of Modern Design*, p. 34, 1960 edition, 1975 printing.)

⁸⁴ See Peach/Lethaby correspondence, R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection. This from February 1, 1916, Peach to Lethaby and September, 1916, Lethaby to Peach (answer to a September 15 letter from Peach). Lethaby made another favorable reference to Naumann in the *R.I.B.A.J.* in 1918. Included also in the material Peach sent was some of the current work being produced by the Werkbund.

⁸⁵ As repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 197. This reference to Naumann may date from 1922 since it appears in a footnote there, in the 1922 book.

⁸⁶ As repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 102.

⁸⁷ As repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 198.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Lethaby continued in this piece, with sarcasm, that he did not enjoy telling his visitor about the demise of the Arts and Crafts in England:

...that our press was very interested [now] in exhibitions of oil-paintings and dealing in antiques, and that, moreover, there was the sportsman's love of killing things, so that the critics (so-called) after a year or two of doubtful indulgence to a new play thing, had practically killed our craft exhibitions; moreover, in this country, art was settled by the R.A. [Royal Academy].⁹⁰

In this 1915 talk on economics Lethaby mentioned reading of Germany's national goals in the magazine Werkbund and continued: "Soon after the France-German war (France-Prussian War, 1870-1871)] a consciously thought-out effort was begun to capture for Germany all scientific and skilled crafts..."⁹¹ This situation Lethaby must have thought could justify an appeal for English support of the crafts. He warned that England must not rely solely on unskilled production and let the crafts dissipate and added that such a dissipation would be unfortunate because skilled crafts might be needed in time of war. Germany, he argued, should not be allowed to dictate which nations were skilled.⁹²

In 1915, Lethaby was willing to concede some originality on the part of the Germans. They were interested in "real architecture" he wrote in "Modern German Architecture..." either inspired by English theory or their own.⁹³ A little later, referring to some material (presumably on art and architecture) that Peach had sent him around 1916, Lethaby, in a reply to Peach, commented that it was "remarkable." He credited much of it to ideas of English origin "although a few Teutonic things are [were] brought in."⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 196. There is a letter from Peach to Lethaby the next month after Lethaby's address (December 31, 1915), in which Peach mentioned that he was sending Lethaby a translation of one of the Werkbund articles on which he would like Lethaby's opinion, pointing out "...it is rather against the recognised view in our schools here." (R.I.B.A. Collection).

⁹² Ibid., p. 197.

⁹³ Op. cit., as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 101.

⁹⁴ R.I.B.A. Collection, Peach/Lethaby correspondence.

A comment of Lethaby's in 1917 (in "The Foundation in Labour") about foreign competition may well refer to Werkbund-spawned German activities. Britain's future, he wrote, may depend on "our working the cranks and wheels as well as others."⁹⁵ The next year, in the R.I.B.A. Journal Lethaby referred to Muthesius indirectly but the over-all tone was somewhat anti-German. His appraisal of German Arts and Crafts was that it was: "mechanically produced pseudo Arts and Crafts."⁹⁶

In the late 1920s correspondence between Peach and Lethaby shows a continued discussion of German architecture. Peach supplied Lethaby with information about the Bauhaus including two books and a clipping on the Bauhaus sent in June of 1927. Lethaby's reply seems negative—he expressed a dislike of the new German and Dutch styles".⁹⁷

The links between the English Arts and Crafts and the Deutscher Werkbund have been clearly established by others, although Lethaby's role, it is believed, has been clarified further in this study. Pevsner saw an additional kind of link between Lethaby and German architects in those early years of the twentieth century. He wrote in the guide book Herefordshire (1963) that Lethaby's All Saint's Church at Brockhampton (1901) was "perhaps the most thrilling church in any country of the years between Historicism and the Modern Movement" and that it heralded Expressionism in Germany after the First World War, as in, for example, the works of Poelzig, Höger, and Häring. Pevsner did not defend this connection, except to call Lethaby's church "strange," "original," and "foreign looking."⁹⁸ The first adjective, if true, may be a link to the works of German Expressionism; the second would be more valued by Expressionists than by exponents of, for example, Gropius' theory. Another appraisal related to the Werkbund and the D.I.A. is pertinent. John Brandon-Jones, in 1970, suggested that there existed an

⁹⁵ Originally published in The Highway, March, 1917, here as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 221.

⁹⁶ Obituary for Cecil Claude Brewer, Sept. 1918, p. 246.

⁹⁷ R.I.B.A. Collection: Lethaby/Peach correspondence—June 13, 1927 Peach to Lethaby and June 14, 1927, Lethaby to Peach.

⁹⁸ Op. cit., Chapter XIII, p. 98.

influence of the Design and Industries Association on Germany (and Scandinavia as well) rather than the other way around.⁹⁹

Urban and Environmental Questions

In 1911 (in Architecture), Lethaby compared English big cities unfavorably with cities, even those smaller in size, on the Continent.¹⁰⁰ German cities, in these years, were the ones pointed to as worthy of emulation. Evidence of Lethaby's views on foreign cities is thoroughly set forth in Chapter XI, but the following summary observations on that subject are included for context and completeness of Lethaby's view of Germany. In "The Architecture of Adventure" (1910) he commented on Munich's tidiness—a quality he highly prized.¹⁰¹ The Builder reported Lethaby's praise in 1913 of the orderliness, "floweriness" and splendor of Berlin, Hanover and Munich.¹⁰² His comments were particularly complimentary of Berlin, including a suggestion for sponsoring an "English Muthesius" with perhaps a broader mission: "Our rich country might do worse with its riches than spend a few hundreds a year in keeping a counsel for civilisation at Berlin, which seems to me to be now the culture capital of Europe. The Institute [the R.I.B.A.] would do a wise thing if it made one of its studentships tenable there."¹⁰³

In Lethaby's talk "Modern German Architecture..." (1915) he spoke approvingly of German cities, their "dignity" and roles as learning centers. English cities, he said, could emulate these qualities.¹⁰⁴ Germany's public works (for example, flood control) should inspire similar efforts in England, Lethaby

⁹⁹ "After William Morris," Brandon-Jones, p. 56.

¹⁰⁰ Op. cit., 1955 edition, p. 189.

¹⁰¹ As repr. in Form in..., p. 91.

¹⁰² "Some Things to be Done", The Builder, February 14, 1913, p. 206. A report of Lethaby's address at an Architectural Association meeting. Reginald Blomfield, sharing the pages of Art and Life (1896) with Lethaby, had much earlier praised the lay-out of a museum in Berlin, in a discussion of city streets. ("Of Public Spaces, Parks, and Gardens," Art and Life (op. cit.), p. 195.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ As repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 99. This attitude could be contrasted with his negative remark in 1896 about one German-speaking city. In "Of Beautiful Cities," Art and Life..., 1896 (op. cit.), p.102, he wrote that one must "above all get rid of the grandeur idea of art. We have only to go to Vienna to see what modern mechanical grandeur will do for a city."

thought.¹⁰⁵ In the same talk he spoke of defects that the German cities Hanover, Strasbourg, Magdeburg and Köln possessed but pointed to his dissatisfaction with contemporary London and Paris as well.

“Efficiency” and “ambition” in German “city-organization” was admired, however.¹⁰⁶ Two years later, in “Architecture and Modern Life” Lethaby spoke of how Germany, in the past three or four decades, had steadily tried to attain a “coherent” type of modern city life—by forethought, organization, and pride.¹⁰⁷

Ashbee had praised Germany the same year (as against England and the United States) for its ability to realize effective zoning: “...the different functions of the city shall be so grouped as not to destroy each other, as is so often the case in English and American cities. It is to the Germans that we owe the most thoughtful development of the Zone or ‘districting’.”¹⁰⁸ Ashbee at this time also discussed the virtues of the efficiency achievable with the autocratic planning of towns, citing a company-town example in Germany (part of the Krupp holdings) as well as an American and an English example.¹⁰⁹ He compared the German plan at Essen with the recent English effort at Rosyth:

And yet how grossly ignorant, not only of the technicalities of town planning, but of the needs of Democracy, are our Government departments. Here is the criticism of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association upon the English Government’s scheme for the building of the new Industrial City of Rosyth, where with intelligence and foresight—such, for instance, as the Germans showed at Essen—we could have had the model dockyard community of the world.¹¹⁰

German (and other Continental) Engineering

Lethaby’s enthusiasm for engineering works abroad is also evident in his writings. In Architecture (1911) he wrote that one should look to the Continent for inspiration in the field of engineering, although

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁰⁷Originally January 24, 1917 address at a R.I.B.A. conference, here as repr. in Form in..., p. 106.

¹⁰⁸Where the Great City Stands (1917), p. 59.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 108.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 39.

Lethaby had also praised the work of English engineers, but more those of the early nineteenth century than the more recent.¹¹¹ He wrote in then, comparing domestic contemporary engineering work with that abroad, especially as to the overall finish of the completed work:

Modern works like the Nile dam, the magnificent railway viaduct at Morlaix [France], and the Rhine bridge at Cologne, need no apology. We must learn from France, Germany, and Switzerland how worthily to finish engineering structures; most of our English works are too crude and raw.¹¹²

Two years later The Builder reported on Lethaby's talk at the Northern Polytechnic (Holloway). There in 1913 he had also offered thoughts on the admirable qualities of Continental engineering works (comparing these positively to some English works) and made distinctions as to what category of "beauty" engineering works were in, as paraphrased in The Builder:

So far as his observation had gone, engineering works on the Continent were much more human and had even reached a very high degree of beauty—that was to say, beauty of a secondary order, because he thought that beauty of the highest order must be more immediately human. It must be nearer man's immediate handiwork, and could not be so tremendously organized as engineering had to be. Much modern engineering on the Continent was highly interesting and reached beauty [of this second type]. Not like Charing Cross railway bridge, or again the Tower Bridge and the stone clothed round it to hide its proper construction and to make it a pretence of being a baronial castle or something—a most astounding imbecility.¹¹³

Lethaby criticized English engineers a few years later still (1918), comparing them disadvantageously to those of the Continent: "...our engineers seem to have been ready to hire themselves out for any triviality or violence: it may be much the same on the Continent, but, if so, it is better done [there] and not so much in evidence."¹¹⁴ The same year as the 1913 Polytechnic address (mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph) Lethaby spoke to the Architectural Association, the talk being entitled "Some Things To Be

¹¹¹Op. cit., 1955 ed., p. 194.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 194.

¹¹³"The Architectural Treatment of Reinforced Concrete," The Builder, February 7, 1913, p. 175.

¹¹⁴"A National Architecture," Part II: "The Art of Construction", October 11, 1918, The Builder, p. 229.

Done.” One listener, P.H. Adams, in commenting on Lethaby’s talk, praised current German structural use of iron in multi-story commercial buildings.¹¹⁵ In 1915, Lethaby projected, in conjunction with his talk to the Architectural Association (“Modern German Architecture...”) a number of slides of German work with large engineering components, including factories and railway stations along with “pure” engineering works. In his accompanying commentary Lethaby displayed admiration for their thoroughness and admitted that some of them were “quite beautiful.”¹¹⁶ Thomas Graham Jackson, in proposing a note of thanks to Lethaby for this presentation said, no doubt referring to the inception of World War I, that they (the English) were not in a mood to imitate Germany or learn much from her.¹¹⁷ Another attendee of the talk, H.H. Statham, also voiced negative thoughts about Germany, saying that the Germans were an inartistic people and he did for one not admire the bridges, nor their treatment of ironwork.¹¹⁸ Lethaby showed fortitude in publicly praising the work of a belligerent state and a Mr. Martin Shaw Briggs, also present, acknowledged this. Lethaby gave the devil his due, Briggs said, and agreed that the English could learn from German railway stations and commercial buildings.¹¹⁹

A few more engineering-related remarks on Germany appear in the 1920’s in Lethaby’s writing. In the “Modernism of Design” series of 1921, in comments on cast iron Lethaby pointed to current German usage of steel, as if it were less widespread then in England. Lethaby felt that architects should not neglect the engineering side of their discipline and in the same series, praised German Technischen Hochschulen for providing a curriculum which educated students for careers in architecture and engineering

¹¹⁵As reported in The Builder, February 14, 1913, p. 208.

¹¹⁶As reported in The Architect’s and Builder’s Journal as “A Discussion on Modern German Architecture,” February 3, 1915, p. 54.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁹*Ibid.* Briggs continued, according to The Architect’s and Builder’s Journal account, saying that he thought that as architects there were two things to copy from the Germans (he did not however emphasize engineering): “(1) The wonderful facility with which they used modern materials, such as plaster of certain sorts and steel. They used these materials with the vigour and freshness we [in Britain] still lacked and there was a large field for investigations into the way in which the Germans used plaster, both externally and internally, and (2) The artistic skill in their employment of simple decorative materials internally. They made a great use of colour in the decoration of their municipal buildings and private houses.” (*Ibid.*)

“indifferently.”¹²⁰ From 1925, in the magazine article “The Engineer’s Art”, there is, again, Lethaby’s praise for German, as well as French and Swiss, engineering:

On the Continent and especially in France, Switzerland and Germany, engineers have conserved a better tradition of their great art, and one may see scores of works which may be looked at with high interest as embodiments of intelligence and force with a sense of public propriety.¹²¹

Praise of German Decoration and Furnishings

In another area of artistic endeavor, decoration and furnishings, Lethaby’s approval of German products and practices can also be noted. In “Design and Industry” (1915), he cited Germany as the place to watch for furniture design (especially hotel furnishings). Lethaby admired the elimination of excrescent ornament.¹²² In his pamphlet House Painting (1920), he wrote with admiration of the traditional European custom (especially in Switzerland and Germany) of external surface decoration of houses and also (later in this writing), of Germany’s maintenance of this practice.¹²³ Lethaby was also attracted to the German use of alternately applied colors in external painting:

The alternate use of two colours, such as white and red, or white and black, or green and black is a method we seldom try. It is a favorite plan in Germany, where we often find barriers or telegraph poles smartly painted in short lengths of black or red and white. Sentry boxes are also painted with chevrons of the royal colours, yellow and black alternately.¹²⁴

¹²⁰The comment on steel is from the September 2 component of the series “Building Commonplaces the Substance of Architecture,” The Builder, p. 288. The comment on education is from part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” also in The Builder, December 2, 1921, p. 749.

¹²¹Architecture, July, 1925, p. 120.

¹²²As repr. in Form in..., (1922), p. 51.

¹²³Op. cit., section entitled “Ancient and Modern,” p. 7. “The Germans have maintained old decorative traditions longer than other people.” (pp. 4-5)

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 2.

Elsewhere in Europe—Comments on French Practitioners and Writers

Lethaby also mentioned French architectural and engineering works in his writings—usually favorably. Certain French writers were also cited. Curiously, Viollet-le-duc was described in one comment in Leadwork in 1893, not as a destructive “restorer” but as one who saw that medieval ways might be better than contemporary ones.¹²⁵ Victor Hugo’s writings on historical architecture were praised by Lethaby as being of service to preservation, but for contemporary evidence, one can notice the following 1919 reference to the French. In his writings in The Builder that year Lethaby recommended Choisy’s works on structural development in architecture:

The best approach to a history of structural advance is Choisy’s, and I should like to begin this little paper by recommending all students at least to examine the vivid diagrams of his books. The clearness and vitality of his illustrations may even suggest what like qualities might be in real building,...

This enthusiasm for Choisy may have originated in Lethaby’s student days and Lethaby’s teacher at the Royal Academy, Paris-trained Richard Phené Spiers (1838-1916), who urged students to read Durand and more recent French writers like Choisy and Guadet. In The Builder two years later (1921), Lethaby brought up Anatole de Baudot (1836-1915), the disciple of Viollet and pupil of Labrousse. Lethaby commented on Baudot’s L’Architecture, Le Passé: Le Présent (as published in 1916), taking exception to what he perceived as an over-emphasis on iron and cement. Lethaby wanted more weight given to “cob and thatch”.¹²⁷

In October of 1921, Lethaby included in his writings in The Builder commentary on Le Corbusier’s thinking. In this series, “Modernism and Design,” Lethaby referred to a French review (entitled in English “The Engineer Architect”) which dealt with Le Corbussier’s tract Trois Rappels à Mm. les architectes

¹²⁵Op. cit., p. 36. Viollet-le-duc is also the subject, favorably treated, of Lethaby’s manuscript “Viollet-le-duc as Teacher” (n.d., with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstable).

¹²⁶“Observation and Suggestions,” Part VIII: “The Beauty of Structures,” September 5, 1919, p. 239.

¹²⁷April 1, 1921, “Modernism and Design,” The Builder, p. 409. The book Lethaby cited by Baudot must have been published posthumously, for the author died in 1915. Baudot had been a professor of architectural history for twenty-five years at the Trocadero (Paris).

(Three Reminders to Architects), although Lethaby mentioned that it is authored by “Saguiner” (Ozenfant’s nickname).¹²⁸ Lethaby was thus familiar with this literary content of Le Corbussier’s before it was incorporated into the book Vers une Architecture.¹²⁹ Lethaby quoted at length from the review which, one presumes, accurately summarizes, if indeed it is not a direct transcript from Le Corbusier’s and Ozenfant’s work:

Architecture has nothing to do with styles. Louis XV, XVI, XIV or Gothic are like a feather in a woman’s hat, sometimes pretty but not always even that. Architecture is more serious and deals with brutal facts, it is manifested in volume and surface. Cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders, pyramids are the primary forms which light reveals. Modern architects have lost the sense of the primary elements, but their task is to deal with the surfaces of masses without destroying them; the volume must maintain its impressiveness although divided, according to requirements. Guided simply by imperative conditions engineers have shown the way and given back to our eyes the joys of geometry. If the volumes are not degraded we receive a satisfying sense of order; when, further, the walls, floors and vaults are adjusted according to reasons which are comprehensible we attain architecture. Great architecture is something more than construction; we, however, are not in a period of architecture but in a period of construction. We shall only rediscover verities when fresh foundations have been laid. For instance, under modern town conditions it is obvious that roofs should be flat terraces—it is plainly ridiculous that the greater part of the area of a town should be reserved for the tête-à-tête of slates and tiles...follow American engineering but flee from American architects.¹³⁰

This last piece of advice could probably be as well directed against English architects who were as disposed as American architects to use more traditional sloped roofs. Lethaby may have included the foregoing quote because of its “anti-style” passages and for its praise of engineers. Predictably, he was not as accepting of the passages on form: “Some of this on mass is at least suggestive if not convincing. On the whole we shall probably agree that large simple forms are impressive, but it is the mission of a

¹²⁸Lethaby presented this work as if it were a book but one wonders if the review actually addresses Trois Rappels as it appeared in L’Esprit Nouveau, prior to its incorporation into Vers Une Architecture. The Three Reminders eventually reappeared in Vers une Architecture in 1923.

¹²⁹Theory and Design in the First Modern Age, orig. 1960, 4th printing of 1967 second edition, 1975, p. 220.

¹³⁰“Modernism and Design,” Part X: “Planning, Composition and Block Form”, October 7, 1921, The Builder, p. 452. Except for a few lines, not much of this quote is comparative textually to the “Three Reminders” section as it appears in translation in English (Towards a New Architecture) in 1927.

work of architecture to do its duty, not to impress.”¹³¹ Lethaby also commented in these writings from 1921 on the second of the “three reminders” (although not the third):

Speaking in a large way of the ‘plan’, the writer whom I have quoted says: ‘The whole structure is developed according to a scheme written on the ground—the plan. The plan records the moment of decision and registers the essence of the sensation; it requires the most active imagination, the severest discipline. The sense of plan has been lost for a hundred years, but modern scientific procedure poses afresh the problem of the plan! This too, is...worth quoting, but a building, a building is more than plan.’¹³²

Lethaby conceded that: “...the sense of plan is much, the sense of mass is much, but the sense of building is more and covers them all.”¹³³ In the December 2 installment of the same series, Lethaby quoted Le Corbusier again—this time in support of engineering: “Without engineering, he wrote, the artist cannot put his ideas into being.”¹³⁴

In the aforementioned series in The Builder, Lethaby wrote of his concern about the separation between the architectural and the engineering professions in France and England—a problem, that the Germans, he believed, were correcting. He then listed a number of non-German contemporary architects who, he thought, were overcoming the problem. These men were commended for their repudiation “of the servile imitation of the past.” A new movement, Lethaby acknowledged, was growing out of this.¹³⁵ The list of architects included, oddly enough, Guimard, earlier a major force in the development of Art Nouveau, which was a movement disliked by Lethaby. Perhaps Lethaby had in mind some later direction in Guimard’s career.¹³⁶

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴“Modernism and Design,” Part XII: “Architecture, Theory and Building Practice”, December 2, 1921, p. 749. Le Corbusier is also brought up later, more ambivalently, in Lethaby’s article “Architecture as Engineering” in 1929.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶The others named are: Plumet, Chedanne, Binet, Sorel, Bouwens, Lecour, Meyer, Herscher, Sauvage, Genuys and Ventre.

Other commentary on France addressed several other issues, and included the mention of other specific personalities. In “Of Cast Iron” (1889), Lethaby admired the iron work of “the Northern Station” (Le Gare du Nord, Paris) both for the decorative and the engineering qualities.¹³⁷ Obviously he was centering on the quality of French engineering in Lethaby’s comment from 1923 on a stone viaduct at Morlaix (previously mentioned). He labeled it then “the noblest piece of modern architecture known to me—not a work of taste and style, but one of expert engineering.”¹³⁸ Lethaby’s recognition of the planning abilities of French architects, a legacy of the Beaux Arts tradition, is apparent in his earlier letter to Charles Hadfield (February 16, 1908) regarding the competition for the new County Hall in London: “The competition as a whole shows how low our powers have fallen—I wish they would give it to a Frenchman, they have some sort of training for big buildings.”¹³⁹ A 1920 passage (in “Architecture as Form in Civilization”), called for the refounding of “civic spirit” in England and he acknowledged antecedents for this in France.¹⁴⁰ The following year Lethaby summarized what should be learned from the French—practicality—and, from French writers, the lesson not to imitate the past. Unlike the French, Lethaby thought that there should be less emphasis on using iron and cement.¹⁴¹ In 1925, Lethaby in sympathy, quoted a passage from Webb: “One can never say when the inventive frog-nation will cease to be the ingenious people of Europe—such vitality is there in that stock.”¹⁴²

Elsewhere in Europe

About contemporary art and architecture in other parts of Europe, Lethaby commented less frequently. As for Netherlands, he admired traditional methods of painting in his (undated) pamphlet

¹³⁷Op. cit., p. 54.

¹³⁸“The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” VIII: “The Two Architectures and Educations for Building,” The Builder, August 3, 1923, p. 178.

¹³⁹R.I.B.A. Collection.

¹⁴⁰As repr. in Form in..., p. 3.

¹⁴¹“Modernism and Design” (1921), The Builder, 1 April, p. 409.

¹⁴²Philip Webb, originally published in 1925 serially in The Builder, as in the 1935 repub. as a book, p. 134. Letter from Webb To Lethaby, 1903.

House Painting. He mentioned the two-color treatment of house shutters, for instance.¹⁴³ Much less favorable comment was made on the results of an exhibition of Dutch students' work shown at the Architectural Association in London in 1923. Referring to some illustrations of the exhibit appearing in The Builder he wrote: "These...if I may say so, seem to me 'style designs,' not building projects. Even in a so-called 'Classic' or 'Gothic' design we should [would] see more of the reasonable necessities of lighting and roofs than here. These designs look like projects for Doom dungeons in a new Apocalypse of terror."¹⁴⁴ Similarly, in this same commentary in The Builder, Lethaby reacted adversely to recent Swedish design work:

Only in today's paper some illustrations are given of buildings at the Swedish Exhibition at Gothenburg which are labeled 'Modernist Architecture and Decoration.' These things are modern only in the sense that they are the latest, but they are in very fact more style conscious than older building with the accustomed labels.¹⁴⁵

Later in the decade (1929) Lethaby advised against copying what had been done in Scandinavia (or in America either).¹⁴⁶ One could learn something from the Swiss, he had written in 1913, having to do with building material and good use of construction materials. This latter category included newer materials, especially cement, although the sense of Lethaby's commentary in this regard does not indicate an unqualified celebration of their availability:

Ideas for the cheap cottage might be gained from the Swiss chalet with its roof at a pitch of 120 degrees, containing no lost space and jutting far so as to keep the walls dry. In Switzerland, too, they have learnt how to lay cement [concrete?] pavements without their cracking, and much use is being made in cheap building of cement tiles not hideous in colour, also, cement drain pipes and troughs. If these things have to come we must learn how to deal with them as well as may be. I have stayed in the ordinary Swiss chalet having is [sic] floors,

¹⁴³Op. cit., n.d., with Lethaby's papers at Barnstaple, section on "Plain Colour," p. 2.

¹⁴⁴"The Building Art—Theories and Discussions," Part VII: "Clerks and Artists," The Builder, July 23, 1923, p. 18.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶"Architecture as Structural Geometry," 1929, The Builder, p. 52.

walls, and ceiling all of a piece with deal boarding; each room was quite a pleasant box to be in.¹⁴⁷

Lethaby, though he commented on avant garde developments in the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia, etc. does not appear to have done so in the case of Russia. There is one connection with Tolstoi, however. It is known that by 1903 the Count had read some of Ruskin's writings and in that year read Lethaby's account of Morris ("Morris as Workmaster", 1901, published 1902). Lethaby compared Tolstoi to Morris, complimenting them both: "Morris saw something deep and wide about labour and humanity: only Tolstoi, I think, of modern men may have seen things with like clearness."¹⁴⁸ Lethaby's references, in 1918 and 1925, for example, to Tolstoi seem to have been favorable ones although an earlier one (1907) in a letter to Sidney Cockerell was not. References to contemporary Italian architectural activities seem to be non-existent. Lethaby does mention his contemporary, the Italian aesthete Benedetto Croce a time or two (in 1918), but the overall effect of these references, as to his opinion of Croce, suggests ambivalence as to Lethaby's positive or negative evaluation of Croce.

The United States and Other English Speaking Countries—The United States

Among the English-speaking countries Lethaby referred to in regard to architectural and related subjects, the United States received the most attention. Comments were mostly favorable. Before undertaking a discussion of these, however, a few of his negative ones will be mentioned.

In 1889, in "Of the Motive," Lethaby listed several criteria necessary for architects to be successful. One was a knowledge of construction.¹⁴⁹ Two years later, he contrasted this with the ability to make drawings, especially American drawings. In "Architectural (?) Examination," he wrote: "Insight into the possibilities of Construction is just what we call Art. This, not a pretty knack of water-colours, or mannered American trick of pen drawing, it is the very thing he [the architect] has set himself to

¹⁴⁷"Some Things to be Done," Lethaby's talk at an A.A. meeting, as reported in The Builder, February 14, 1913, p. 206.

¹⁴⁸Scraps and Scraps, op. cit. A.H. Powell, editor, 1956 (original date of Lethaby's words not given).

¹⁴⁹"Of the 'Motive' in Architectural Design," Architectural Association Notes, IV, 1889, p. 24.

master.”¹⁵⁰ In 1893, Horace Townsend, writing in the catalog for an Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show (an organization in which Lethaby was also active) recalled a talk with an American at a previous exhibition. Townsend presented the man (a manufacturer) in a negative way, as one who could not see the real intent and value of Arts and Crafts products but only thought, instead, of the commercial potential for machine-made copies. This is the soul of the bourgeois, Townsend said with disdain, but the economist, with presumably a wider outlook did not see things any differently: “...unless we happen to enjoy the evidence of personal thought and care expended on one piece of work for its own sake the very best thing shown [in the current show] will only provoke similar, though possibly more elegantly expressed criticism from the modern economists with his machine-made opinions.”¹⁵¹ Another ideological ally and contemporary of Lethaby, Walter Crane, can be found praising American architecture, if not American drawing, a few years later. In 1896 he said: “One of the best modern recent public buildings I have seen is the new Public Library at Boston, Massachusetts.”¹⁵²

Like Townsend, Lethaby adopted a patronizing tone in his comment about a hypothetical American involved in the meaningless practice of historical style-copying. Style, he wrote in 1923, was something that “answered to the mind of a people at a given moment”—it was not shapes which could be copied. He continued: “...a rich American might erect a bigger Stonehenge outside New York, but it could not be in the Bronze Age style without Bronze Age astronomy, sacrifices, culture and customs.”¹⁵³ Criticizing contemporary architectural education in 1923, Lethaby complained about teachers passing on their notions of “current style”—of their rapidly changing enthusiasms in this regard. “The American Style (McKim Mead and White)” was listed like “Beaux Arts design,” “The Grand Manner,” “Neo-Greek” and

¹⁵⁰ Architectural Association Notes, May, 1891, p. 116.

¹⁵¹ “The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at the New Gallery, 1893,” The Studio Magazine, October, 1893, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵² “Of the Decoration of Public Buildings,” appearing with Lethaby’s essay in Art in Life... (op. cit.), p. 144. Crane liked the sculpture and murals, among other features.

¹⁵³ “Modernism and Design,” Part VII: “The Uses of Antiquity,” July 21, 1921, p. 7.

others as among the rapidly-changing objects of misguided style copiers.¹⁵⁴ Two years later, in his study of Webb, “American Beaux Arts” is cited as one of those “styles” erroneously emulated.¹⁵⁵

Occasionally, commentary about the United States took an ambivalent tone. Lethaby said in 1917 (“Education of the Architect”) in regard to architectural organizations, that those in the United States (perhaps he had in mind the A.I.A.) had acquired too much power.¹⁵⁶ Near the end of his life, in February 1931, Lethaby commented on some large churches currently under construction in the United States, wanting, seemingly, to point out the error in these projects of attempting to work in a “style.”

For this ambiguous and betraying word ‘Gothic’ we should frankly substitute medieval and sham-medieval. We cannot really be Gothic out of due time. Thus, I am told in a letter from America of a grand new ‘Gothic’ cathedral now building in San Francisco:--“the great steel structure is already thrown up against the sky.”

This, however, I think may be better than many of the amazingly skillful things we get done here [in England].¹⁵⁷

Lethaby is not clear as to what was so “skillful” about the contemporary English examples. From the context one is tempted to think it may be something in the realm of intricate and perhaps technically well-executed (but irrelevant) ornament. In 1931 Lethaby also expressed confidence that in the United States, “historicism” would soon be given up and a “bold” new approach would supplant it, an approach which England would then want to copy, as it had other American results.

America at the present moment is interested in rearing several large sham-Gothic cathedrals, but it can hardly be believed that this fashion will there long be maintained. Soon probably

¹⁵⁴“The Building Art—Theories and Discussions,” Part III: “Foundation of Design,” March 9, 1923, pp. 405-406.

¹⁵⁵Philip Webb, 1935, book edition of the original 1925 series on Webb in *The Builder*, p. 85. Version #1 (in a transcript of *Scripts and Scraps* at the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection), a collection of three hundred and seventy aphorisms related to Powell’s publication (by the same name) of his selection of Lethaby’s sayings, includes a particularly negative entry regarding the United States - #8 “*America Speaks*”: “Over England have I cast my shoe, And London is my wash pot.” (no page number avail.) What Lethaby’s complaint was here, and what the metaphor was is not clear. Probably, it has to do with what he felt was undue American cultural influence on England, and the manifestations of this in London.

¹⁵⁶Orig. prepared as an address to the R.I.B.A. in 1917, as repr. in *Form in...* (1922), p. 126.

¹⁵⁷“Modern Church Building,” *The Builder*, February 6, 1931, p. 283.

the Americans will be boldly experimenting in building modern churches, and then we shall doubtless be as ready to copy their results in this sphere as in others. Would it not be better to develop our own thinking than to wait until there is something to copy.¹⁵⁸

Positive Remarks about the United States

Some of Lethaby's commentary about the United States of a favorable nature, about architecture and related topics, dates from the early 1920s. In "Architecture as Form in Civilization" (1920), Americans were complimented on being "alert" in regard to their appreciation of historical continuity—manifested in the founding of local historical societies which collected and worked with local records, tried to preserve old buildings, and marked historical sites.¹⁵⁹ Some such remarks also appear in his letter to his friend Harry Peach in December, 1920. There is a wistful passage in this (revealing trepidation mixed with curiosity) about visiting America although he felt he was too old to travel there for a visit: "...the great buildings would frighten me, but still I should like to ponder it..."¹⁶⁰ In the same letter, he compared the United States favorably with England in architectural matters and speculated that England would soon have to import American architects to handle the larger projects. Commenting on some remark on the United States in Peach's previous letter, Lethaby wrote:

I feel to know all you say of America except that I don't think they could produce all they are doing without a-caring for it somehow. It is that we care desperately but can't do? Anyhow I am telling my architect acquaintances that if we go on as we have been doing for another dozen years American architects will have to be brought over to do any biggish job,...

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 284.

¹⁵⁹Op. cit., (as repr. in *Form in...*, 1922), pp. 3-4.

¹⁶⁰December 5, 1920. As repr. in *Friends of a Lifetime* (op. cit.), p. 138.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 137.

In this letter Lethaby also acknowledged American superiority in a number of other fields (“American sculpture and painting and archaeology all out-point [?] us—and yachts as well”).¹⁶² In the series “Modernism and Design”, The Builder, (1921), Lethaby suggested that American architects were trying to assert an identity of their own, while present-day English ones, unlike those around 1900, were not. In saying this he first quoted a letter from an American correspondent on the insalubrious effects of a Beaux Arts education:

The day after I had sent off the MS. of this [January 7] piece I received a letter from America and will quote a passage from it:--“I am an antagonist of all such schools, maintaining that art in France was killed by the Beaux-Arts and that no homing graduate of the schools [that is, one returning to America] ever comes to anything, except, of course, those who would clearly have come to something, school or no school. Along with the very few successes, the schools certainly turn out a dreary line of disappointing failures! Be this as it may, American architects have now ambitions beyond imitating Paris. Twenty years ago, before our academic reaction had matured, we were giving ideas to the world.”¹⁶³

Two responses to Lethaby’s article published in The Builder in early 1921, might be noted in the context of this discussion. One response, offered by a Mr. Bagenal [probably H. Bagenal] on January 21 suggested with some flippancy that Lethaby should read the article on an American architect’s office in the same issue that his own article appeared to obtain the answer to a question he has posed. Bagenal added a gibe about the (non)usefulness of Lethaby’s advice:

¹⁶²Ibid., p. 138. In an address to the Art Workers Guild, as part of a memorial evening for Lethaby the year after his death, Peach provided a quotation by Lethaby (circa 1920) in which referred to another kind of American leadership and chastised England for reliance on prestigious institutions like Oxford: “You want [that is, you should have] a director of production, a chair of Civilization and all sorts of new things: they are doing it in America while we are dreaming Oxford dreams—of the most exquisite ignorance ever evolved—the Glossolatory of Oxocracry, or Oxassery in elegant he-haw!” (From “A Short address given at the Art Workers Memorial Evening, April 28, 1932”—entitled also: “W.R. Lethaby,” TS, R.I.B.A. Collection, Peach/Lethaby correspondence.) In “Town Redemption” (*op.cit.*, no firm date but sometime after the start of World War I) is Lethaby’s suggestion that each English town should have a “semi-official advisory council” for “the human side of development”. Lethaby pointed to the United States, where such councils existed and he said that they had proven very effective. (MS, Barnstaple, no pagination). On the subject of educational institutions, Peach had written to Lethaby in 1916 (April 1) that Columbia University in New York was hoping to start a course in “decoration” which would lead to a degree in industrial art and interior decoration. Peach in his letter was very enthusiastic about this. Later the same year (December 28) he wrote to Lethaby about American Indian Crafts. (Both letters from the R.I.B.A. Collection.)

¹⁶³*Op. cit.*, January 7, 1921, p. 3. An earlier instance of correspondence with an American occurred in 1910 with the response of an American architect to Lethaby’s paper delivered to the R.I.B.A. that year, “The Architecture of Adventure,” as covered in the June 22, Architect’s and Builder’s Journal.

The real temper of today, of ‘the vivid moment now’, he [Lethaby] could easily find if he cared to do so in the article by Mr. H.B. Newbold, which appeared in the same issue, entitled ‘The American Architect’s Office from Within’. The article is significant, it contains more useful advice to younger men than Professor Lethaby’s namely the advice to emigrate to America.¹⁶⁴

This respondent continued acknowledging English dependence on America at that time in a number of pursuits relating to architecture, and expressed regret that American architects were competing successfully with English architects for work in England:

It would be idle to deny that already we ‘go’ to America for ideas on museums, stores, libraries, cinema halls, railway stations, concert rooms, on regional planning, town furnishings, architectural publications, and a host of other subjects: that the research in applied science (one of the great controlling factors in the tendency of modern building), almost unsupported in England, comes from Harvard, Geneva, Illinois, [could the writer have intended the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana?] and from the American Academy of Sciences; but it is not to these details I would direct the closest attention. The strongest pull comes from the obvious fact that in America the things we care about are considered worthwhile; money is spent upon them, and consequently, there is a demand and some kind of hope. It is false to say that the chief cause at home of our discouragement is the lack of building of any kind... No, there is building, but not for us. As an example at random, consider the phenomena of the new Bush building at the end of Kingsway. The site has been familiar to Londoners for eighteen years; but its possibilities, both business and architectural, have been left for an American business firm, employing an American architect, to develop.¹⁶⁵

Another part of this response, one printed in The Builder the following week, also compared the architectural situation in America and England. As with the remarks just quoted, it seems to not conflict with Lethaby’s own views:

Further, he [Lethaby] says of Americans, and I agree: “They have ambitions now towards a modernist school of their own... In England why should not our schools also the same?” Why not, indeed! It is far more than a matter of taste, it will be a failure of the national intellect if we do not seek to put our building customs on a national base, and we need something firmer to build on than myths about “the orders,” and the taste of the “patron!”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴“Modern Tendencies and Victorian Criticism” (“A reply to Professor Lethaby”), 21 Jan., 1921, The Builder, p. 92.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶“Victorian Criticism, a reply to W.R.L.,” The Builder, 28 Jan., 1921, p. 119.

The next month, another reader's published response reacted to the second of three comments by the respondent quoted in the foregoing passages, disclaiming the great American influences on contemporary English work posited by Bagenal

That architectural vitality is the monopoly of Americans, as he [Bagenal] seems to suggest, is also a fallacy which will find support only from those who belittle the efforts of their own country. As a matter of fact the influence of America upon our present-day designs is infinitesimal compared with, say, that of Italy on our work at the Reanaissance—work which became English from plinth to cornice.¹⁶⁷

And continuing, with an emphasis meant to encourage: "It is, however, vital that we should feel our own progress and believe in it, otherwise, in despair, we shall give up the task...the pulse of architecture is not so feeble as you would think, but it beats ever more strongly and without Yankee stimulus!"¹⁶⁸

In March, 1923, in his series in The Builder, "The Building Art: Theories and Discussions," Lethaby cited two opinions on Wren (one American and one English) and indicated his sympathy with the American viewpoint, which emphasized construction as the basis for architecture:

Only last week two documents were sent to me. One contained opinions on Wren by an Englishman and an American,...The Englishman wrote "the dome of St. Paul's is a paltry affair compared to the dome of St. Peter's"; only insular prejudice would say otherwise!...

The American writes of Wren:--" the crossing of St. Paul's is a very daring flight of imagination, his dome is a masterpiece and some of his spires are wonders of logical construction!" Surely this "logical construction" is the only firm base for architectural criticism. ...it seems to me that if, while one kindred nation is thinking of architecture in terms of "logical construction" the other is dreamily composing in "the styles," the position must be serious. We, too, have to learn hardness for a season.¹⁶⁹

In April of the same year, in the same series, Lethaby indicated awareness of the American authors Emerson and Thoreau, and drew on them for support of his views on architecture. Emerson, Lethaby

¹⁶⁷"A Grain of Mustard Seed," February 11, 1921, The Builder, p. 185.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹"The Building Art—Theories and Discussions," Part III: "Foundation in Design", The Builder, March 9, 1923, p. 406.

noted, was sympathetic to the ideas that architecture should be “reasonable” and Thoreau’s position on contemporary architectural ornament was found to be close to his own:

In Emerson’s Essays there is a sympathetic account of some architect who had propounded the strange idea that ‘architecture’ should be real and reasonable. It seems to be this thought to which Thoreau refers in a passage which must be condensed:

“What reasonable men ever supposed that ornaments were in the skin merely—that the tortoise got his spotted shell by such a contract as the inhabitants of Broadway their Trinity Church?...A great proportion of architectural ornaments are literally hollow, and a gale would strip them off like borrowed plumes without injury to the substantials: The spirit having departed out of the tenant it is the architecture of the grave.” Here again everything seems clear to the bottom and everything is said.¹⁷⁰

Related to his views on meaningless ornament are Lethaby’s opinions about the historical styles (as applied to contemporary building). The next month, in the same series, Lethaby used a reference to America to lead into one of his condemnations of what he viewed as the preoccupation with the use of these styles in recent times: “The phrase, ‘the period-styles,’ which the furnishing firms seem to be adopting from the clear-seeing and clear-saying Americans, may be welcomed by us as making more explicit what has been the central aim of architects for more than a century.”¹⁷¹ Contemporary American authors, as well as earlier ones, were called on by Lethaby to reinforce points, as in the case with Lewis Mumford.¹⁷² In The Builder, in the August installment of the aforementioned series, Lethaby quoted Mumford as representative of current American views on the difference between handicraft and machine-made work. Passages from Mumford quoted by Lethaby emphasized the importance of worker satisfaction in the production of handcrafted work and the need to preserve some autonomy for the craftsman in these activities. Also stressed was that machine-made products should not be modeled after

¹⁷⁰Part IV: “Foundation in Design,” 6 April, 1923, The Builder, p. 567.

¹⁷¹Part V: “Design in the Period-Styles, or Building Realities,” 4 May, 1923, The Builder, p. 736.

¹⁷²On the subject of earlier times in America, Lethaby reviewed a book in The Builder in 1926 dealing with late eighteenth—early nineteenth century American architecture. The review was entitled “The Development of American Architecture (1783-1830),” p. 122.

inappropriate prototypes nor should attempts be made to simulate handcrafted work. Lethaby introduced Mumford thusly:

The day after I had sent off the proof of my last part I received from America a copy of a weekly review (The New Republic, June 6, 1923), with an article so nearly akin to what I had been trying to say that its forms quite a coincidence. Entitled “Beauty and the Industrial Beast,” it is written by Mr. Louis [sic] Mumford, and I want to make a quotation or two to show what is being thought in America... “Now the aesthetics of handicraft and of the machine are different things; and what is a virtue in one department is the opposite in the other. The key to handicraft aesthetics is superfluity... Each worker must elaborate the utilitarian object... The craftsman literally possesses his work. Often elaboration passes the point at which it would give the highest delight to the beholder. Nevertheless, the craftsman keeps pouring himself into his job. Carving wood and hacking stone, when it is done with a free spirit and not in servile imitation of some other person’s design, is a dignified and enjoyable way of living... [On the other hand]... The conditions that make possible good machine work are a complete calculation of consequences embodied in a working drawing; to deviate from this calculation is to risk failure. The qualities in good machine work follow from the restraints—they are precision, economy, finish. Could the workman [in this situation] express anything what would be but his sense of dullness of his desire to escape... [But] there is a new kind of beauty to be achieved in and through the machine. In a recent book from Berlin there are photographs of grain elevators, automobiles, and office buildings which exemplify the peculiar felicities of machine-work; and if this is exaggeration, it is a significant fact. A great part of the success of these buildings is the fact that the designer did not model his elevator after a temple or his automobile after a Trojan Chariot. Unfortunately, a good part of machine work is perverted to create fake handicraft and the worker is turned into a servile drudge.”¹⁷³

Near the end of 1923, in his December piece in “The Building Art” series under discussion, Lethaby urged again that one not copy American work—this time in regard to the architectural effects of New York City’s set-back (zoning) law, which Lethaby observed, made sense—but not when misapplied to English building: “Now that in New York the necessities of getting light down into the street has resulted in the pushing back of the upper stories of their tall buildings—a common sense structural arrangement—we are rushing to copy the look of it, at quarter scale, as ‘style, composition, and massing!’”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³Part VIII: “The Two Architectures and Education for Building,” 23 Aug., 1923, The Builder, p. 176.

¹⁷⁴“Words or Realities? and Positive Architecture,” 7 Dec., 1923, The Builder, p. 890.

In his writings there is evidence of Lethaby's regard for a number of Americans, besides those already mentioned. These come from various walks of life but the greatest number are literary figures. Included in this category Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Whitman is mentioned in Lethaby's first book, Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891) and quotations from Emerson and Hawthorne can be found recorded in Lethaby's sketchbooks of 1885 and 1886 respectively.¹⁷⁵ Oliver Wendell Holmes is mentioned in a favorable context although it is not clear if the reference is to the father, a well-known author or his prominent son, the jurist. The other major group of Americans outside of architecture and art practitioners admired by Lethaby, were those who had made contributions to philosophy. This group includes William James, John Dewey and George Santayana (who at one point in his life stated his desire to be an architect). Specifically, James' Varieties of Religious Experience was referred to by Lethaby in 1921. Lethaby referred to Dewey as someone "of large scholastic attainments" who appreciated "what labour means in life."¹⁷⁶ In the 1956 version of Lethaby's 1925 series on Webb in The Builder Santayana's Reason and Society (1905) was listed in his bibliography.¹⁷⁷

There is evidence of an interest in American architecture on the part of some of Lethaby's brethren in the English Arts and Crafts Movement. His friend Halsey Ricardo provided the Architectural Review (A.R.) of 1904 with an article on the architecture of St. Louis' World's Fair (Louisiana Purchase Exposition) of that year.¹⁷⁸ Another example, a few years later in the A.R. was a series of articles (1908-1909) by Francis S. Swales on U.S. architecture. Lethaby's friend Mervyn Macartney was editor of the

¹⁷⁵Lethaby mentioned in a letter to Peach (undated) that his wife, an American incidentally, was fond of Whitman also. The mention in Architecture, Mysticism and Myth is as in the 1975 reprint on p. 71, as per a quote from Whitman to begin his Chapter IV.

¹⁷⁶As quoted by A.H. Powell in Scraps and Scraps, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁷⁷Architecture, Nature and Magic, *op.cit.* Reason and Society was part of Santayana's larger work, The Life of Reason (1905-1906).

¹⁷⁸The same year, the Architectural Review (the Boston-published one) may have been providing Americans with some of their knowledge about English Arts and Crafts architecture, as in the article that January entitled "Recent Architecture in England."

publication at that time. Also one could mention C.R. Ashbee, whom Alistair Service has credited with being the “moving spirit in the later days of the Arts and Crafts Movement” for his dedicated interest in American art and architecture.¹⁷⁹ A near turn-of-the-century example of Ashbee’s writing shows interest in things American is his American Sheaves and English Seed Corn (1901). A later work, Where the Great City Stands (1917), is heavy with American references, both in text and illustration. Ashbee, in this 1917 work, assessed the current state of architectural affairs (in Western culture) much more positively than would Lethaby:

...architecture, which like most of the arts in the Industrial era had drifted from its moorings and lost its truthfulness, came back to first principles. This means [meant?] a revision of academic forms: orders, columns, cornices, all flummery stuck on, was pruned away; a real structural form, true architecture in the Greek or Medieval manner, was once more involved,...¹⁸⁰

Ashbee’s proof of this renaissance included architectural examples from the American Middle West and Pacific Coast. He praised American libraries—at Boston, Portland and Madison, Wisconsin, as well as that at Columbia University. American train stations were worthy of mention also: “To sit in one of the great ‘depot’ waiting halls, Grand Central; or Pennsylvania [Station] in New York...or Washington, and listen to the porters intoning the trains, gives one a feeling of almost cathedral repose...”¹⁸¹ Several of Ashbee’s comments on American cities and related topics were mentioned in Chapter XI. Likewise, Ashbee’s and Frank Lloyd Wright’s views on the use of the machine in art and architecture are brought into the discussion of Lethaby’s own views in Chapter X.

Many personal connections link Lethaby and the English Arts and Crafts circle with their contemporary counterparts and admirers in the United States. American Arts and Crafts organizations materialized in the 1890s in emulation of their English predecessors (the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts in June, 1897 and the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society of October the same year) and in May, 1903

¹⁷⁹See Service, Edwardian Architecture and Its Origins, 1975, p. 355.

¹⁸⁰Op. cit., p. 18-19.

¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 135.

(May) the William Morris Society was founded in America, seven years after Morris' death. The American Elbert Hubbard had visited Morris in 1894 and Ashbee had come to Hubbard's Roycroft complex six years later. The United States saw its first major Arts and Crafts exhibition in 1897 and only the year before the (later) highly successful American architect Bertram Goodhue participated in the London Arts and Crafts Exhibition in London and must have been in contact with Lethaby. In the November, 1896 Studio favorable comments were offered about Goodhue and his Arts and Crafts-oriented periodical:

Mr. Goodhue, founder of the short-lived Knight Errant, the most satisfactory of all magazines which sprang indirectly from The Century Guild's Hobby Horse, is one of those in whose hands the decorative movement in America upon the line of our own Arts and Crafts, may be shaped to working ends.¹⁸²

Lethaby did refer to his friendship with Goodhue in his series on Webb in The Builder in 1925.¹⁸³

Around the same time that Goodhue was exhibiting his craftsmanship in London, Gustaf Stickley in 1898 was meeting Voysey, Ashbee and others of the English Arts and Crafts Movement—three years before the first issue of Stickley's influential American periodical The Craftsman appeared.¹⁸⁴ H.H. Richardson, in whose interior and furniture designs can be found interesting associations with the English Arts and Crafts, had been in England in 1859 on his way to his studies as an architectural student in Paris. He returned to England at least by 1882 when he met Morris and his circle. Richardson's later (and singular) English commission, the residence "LuLuland" (Melbourne Road, Bushey, Hertfordshire—designed in 1886 but completed only in 1894) was an influence on James Maclaren, and other Art

¹⁸²"The Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1896" (unsigned), p. 119.

¹⁸³As found in the 1935 book version, Philip Webb, p. 71. Goodhue had died the year before (1924).

¹⁸⁴The first issue was October, 1901, published in Syracuse.

Workers' Guild members linked with the English Arts and Crafts.¹⁸⁵ John Belcher, the prominent English architect and early supporter of the Arts Workers' Guild (he joined the first year, in 1884. Belcher had gone to the United States in 1899 because Norman Shaw had passed on to him the "assessorship" of the Phoebe Hearst University in California (now University of California at Berkeley)).¹⁸⁶

Other English-speaking countries, if not his contemporary architectural practitioners there, were also referred to by Lethaby—usually in a favorable context—and usually in regard to thoughts about urbanism and the environment. In a talk called "Art in Common Life—Loving Our Cities" (1921) Lethaby had spoken of his concept of a kind of local patriotism called "town love". Canada and South Africa (and the United States) were ahead of England in this, he said. Toronto and Montreal had citizens who took pride in their cities and kept them up. Lethaby said he had heard Pretoria praised on the same grounds. All these he compared favorably to cities in England.¹⁸⁷ Also, as mentioned in Chapter XI, in his manuscript "Town Redemption," as Lethaby wrote, with urban concerns providing the theme, that England must keep up with what is being done in her colonies (and keep up with Europe and America as well). Toronto was a dignified town, he stated in this piece, and Pretoria had "real distinction and

¹⁸⁵Service's *Edwardian Architecture...* (*op. cit.*), 1975, p. 107. The influence of the English architect, Shaw, on Richardson has also been noted (especially as to arrangements in plan and overall external compositional effects) but this seems to stem from work in Shaw's office before Lethaby's arrival there and even if it were otherwise, planning and overall composition were not the activities in which Lethaby seems to have been most involved in while in Shaw's office.

¹⁸⁶Richard Norman Shaw, Andrew Saint, 1976, p. 269. (see also the *R.I.B.A.J.*, 1913, p. 75). The work of another prominent English architect not so closely allied with the Arts and Crafts is said to have changed radically around 1910 as a result (partially) of a visit to the United States. John Burnet (1857-1938), David Walker has written in his chapter "Sir John James Burnet" in Service's *Edwardian Architecture...* (*op. cit.*, p. 205) gave up his exuberant Baroque decorative style in favor of "an uncompromisingly modern severity" as a result of a visit to the United States and one to Europe (especially to Germany and Austria). Burnet had gone to the United States in 1894 and 1896 and, perhaps later as well. Burnet's Kodak Building in London of 1910-11 (although the authorship of the design is sometimes given to his partner, Tait) has been cited by Service as evidence of this change. Burnet knew the slightly older American architect Charles McKim well from the days when they both trained in Paris under Pascal and he probably knew Louis Sullivan from the École des Beaux Arts. Another American architect, D.H. Burnham had collaborated with Burnet on Selfridge's Department Store in London also. Nicholas Taylor in the chapter "Sir Albert Richardson: A Case of Edwardianism" in Service's 1975 book *Edwardian Architecture*, (*op. cit.*) has written that Burnet also brought post-Chicago Exhibition American Classical to London, citing the British Museum as an example of this (p. 452).

¹⁸⁷The rest of the title for Lethaby's talk was reported as "Professor Lethaby on True Civilization", the *Times*, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

beauty.”¹⁸⁸ Also, he reported that a great effort toward city order was being made in New Delhi and complimented British improvements in occupied Baghdad.¹⁸⁹

Lethaby appears not to have utilized Asian examples much when commenting on modern art and architecture. Besides the comments about Baghdad just mentioned, in 1896, when explaining some of his city planning suggestions for London in his essay “Of Beautiful Cities,” he compared a point along the Thames with Golden Horn of Istanbul, but this reference is to a natural phenomenon, not one culturally produced.¹⁹⁰ Japan is mentioned still earlier (1893) in Leadwork in a passage about decoration which may be essentially, an appreciation of traditional craftsmanship.¹⁹¹ Modern Japan was definitely the subject, however, of a passage in Architecture (1911) wherein Lethaby compared the Renaissance, as a cultural revolution, to events in modern Japan (as well as to those in Europe). The unfortunate consequence of revolutionary change in these modern instances Lethaby wrote, was that architecture became divorced from the people.¹⁹²

Comments by Others on the International Aspects of Lethaby's Thought

A few comments by others on some international aspects of Lethaby's thought will be offered here. In 1964, Julius Posener, in Anfänge des Functionalismus von Arts und Crafts zum Deutscher Werkbund, published his account of the English-German connections regarding twentieth century functionalism in design. The most important character in this work is Muthesius, but second is Lethaby. Posener allocated the first chapter to Lethaby and described his role in the theater of twentieth century functionalism. This was realized, he argued, through Muthesius' publication of Lethaby's built works, Lethaby's writings and

¹⁸⁸Op. cit. (MS at Barnstaple), p. 2.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., not paginated. Baghdad and New Delhi were not, of course, English speaking countries per se, although for a time under British rule and Pretoria far from predominantly English-speaking.

¹⁹⁰Art and Life... (1897), op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁹¹Op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁹²Op. cit., p. 178.

through his impact as a teacher.¹⁹³ A number of Lethaby's writings (including "Modern German Architecture...") are listed in the Bibliography of Posener's book and two illustrations of Lethaby's Avon Tyrell (entry view and plan) are included. Posener commented on the import of several of Lethaby's writings singling out in particular "The Architecture of Adventure" (1910). As translated, we find:

This is Lethaby's most 'advanced' performance. He goes beyond Muthesius and...beyond the point of view of Gropius at that time [1910] in that he does not speak of "beautiful" architecture and does not acknowledge laws of the formation. [that is, the roots of architecture in past styles] Here in the year 1910 the concept is spoken out, referred to by Konrad Wachsmann in the year 1958, Wendepunkt in Bauen [Turning Point in Building].¹⁹⁴

Also, Posener noted Lethaby's comments on Germany made in his address to the Arts and Crafts society in 1915, "Political Economy or Productive Economy." In this address, as quoted by Posener [check?], Lethaby spoke with admiration of Naumann and other German economists—especially the interest they had paid to the "ideals of the working class."¹⁹⁵ Posener stressed the impact of the London Central School of Arts and Crafts (and Lethaby's leading role there) on changes in approaches to education in his own country: "The [L.C.C.] School, which still stands, is truly Lethaby's own creation and has exercised through Muthesius a decided influence on the reformation of industrial art education in Prussia."¹⁹⁶

The English architect and writer, John Brandon-Jones, in "After William Morris" (1970) also offered an assessment of Lethaby's influence on Germany (as well as on Scandinavia): "Lethaby's

¹⁹³Other chapters, consecutively, are devoted to Thomas Graham Jackson, C.F.A. Voysey, C.R. Ashbee, George G. Scott, Hermann Muthesius and to the Werkbund's 1914 exhibition in Cologne.

¹⁹⁴Op. cit., p. 27. The two writings by Lethaby cited thus far in this paragraph began first as talks in the years mentioned and were later published in Form in... (1922).

¹⁹⁵Ibid. Posener cited Lethaby's address as being titled "National Economy or Productive Economy" and quoted Lethaby as saying (translated from the German): "Naumann and other capable modern national economists (or agriculturalists) in Germany are interested in, if I don't go astray, ideals of the working class which in an astonishingly short time [via the Werkbund] has brought a style of the formation for the industrial product into fashion which was commercially successful." (Ibid.) Posener may be quoting from a slightly different text (either in English or perhaps German) than the one published in Form and Civilization in 1922. That latter one reads: "...and so the Werkbund just mentioned was formed, which in marvellously quick time has brought a commercially captivating type of design into vogue." (Form in..., p. 197.) The word Werkbund is footnoted in the English version, and, at the bottom of the page the note reads: "Naumann and others of the ablest modern economists in Germany are, I believe, interested in the ideals of the Werkbund." (Ibid.)

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 27.

proposals for machine production from first-rate models were not accepted easily by his contemporaries on this side of the Channel, but they had a profound effect upon the Scandinavians and the Germans.”¹⁹⁷

In 1975, another Englishman, Stephen Bayley, made correlations between Lethaby’s thinking and Le Corbusier’s in assessing Lethaby’s contribution to architecture and then went on to comment on

Lethaby’s role in the Anglo-German connection. First, in connection to Le Corbusier, Bayley has said:

“Why is Lethaby important? For one thing, simply because, with less messianic force and with a good deal more reason, he said the same things which were later to make Le Corbusier a magus of modern architectural theory.”¹⁹⁸ Later in Bayley’s commentary, again about Le Corbusier and Lethaby, he wrote:

Lethaby’s significance in the course of art and architecture in Britain and Europe is very large indeed. The easy connection I earlier made with Le Corbusier is perhaps an historical fluke as far as the machine analogy is concerned, but it does show a community of ideas between great thinkers.¹⁹⁹

On Germany and Lethaby Bayley added: “Of more real importance [than the similarities between Le Corbusier’s and Lethaby’s thought]...is the position of Lethaby in the relationship between Britain and Germany in art and design in the early decades of this century.”²⁰⁰

Summary

This chapter began by observing some of Lethaby’s more nationalistic remarks, in particular those as to the possibility of national traits in art and architecture, as applied to England in particular. Some of Lethaby’s comments on the effects of a “national spirit” in other countries, especially Germany, were included. The remainder of the chapter was devoted to a subject which was antithetical to any narrowness of purview which Lethaby’s interest in supporting a “national” style of architecture for England might

¹⁹⁷Op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁹⁸“W.R. Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition,” R.I.B.A.J., April, 1975, p. 29. These comments accompany Bayley’s review of the repub. that year of Lethaby’s first book, Architecture, Mysticism and Myth.

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

²⁰⁰Ibid.

entail. This second, larger segment of the chapter first reviewed briefly the variety of Lethaby's international connections—for example his interests as a historian and preservationist, his travels and personal contacts abroad. Then, concentrating on Lethaby's views on modern architecture, his references to the activities and ideas of foreigners were examined—especially those pertaining to Germany, France and the United States. In the case of Germany the reciprocal flow of “influences” is discussed, addressing the role of Muthesius and the appearance of England's Design and Industries Association. More general comments by Lethaby on town planning, engineering and other activities in contemporary Germany were discussed. Lethaby's comments on architectural, art and engineering activity in other European countries, were then brought up with some links between Lethaby's architectural theory and that of modern Swiss and French architectural thinkers discussed. Following this section, Lethaby's comments on architectural events in the United States are treated as are his references to American writers on architecture. For comparison, some thoughts on America by the other prominent English Arts and Crafts theorist, Ashbee, was next included. The views of some of Lethaby's readers, reacting to Lethaby's writings in The Builder were also offered and those that have some link to foreign countries or involve foreign correspondents. Next were offered a few miscellaneous comments by Lethaby about planning, architecture and art in a few other countries and finally the selected comments of several later architectural writers about the international impact of Lethaby.

The main sense of Lethaby's utilization of foreign examples in his writings seems to be to point up laudable activities or sound reasoning from abroad in the hope of improving things in his own country. Comparing the two countries Lethaby commented upon the most, Germany and the United States, the greater specificity of his remarks on the former may be related to his first-hand knowledge of the country (and that of close colleagues like Harry Peach). That Lethaby was a principal figure among Arts and Crafts architects with whom the German Muthesius came in contact with and that Muthesius amply demonstrated his regard for Lethaby in his publications on English architecture has been adequately brought out. It was shown that when England appears as the recipient of German influence in the design fields that Lethaby again was in the midst of this process, through his involvement with the Design and

Industries Association and through his comments in print about contemporary German activities. Also, the context of Lethaby's praise of Germany at a time of great general antipathy for Germans in England because of World War I was noted. It is clear in Lethaby's writings that he was aware of the influence the English Arts and Crafts Movement exercised on Germany and equally clear that he recognized the point at which Germany took the lead in activities forming the development of the Modern Movement. Lethaby's comments about Germany seem basically to be a series of attempts to galvanize the English into doing something to re-acquire a leading position in the design sphere. In commenting on France, Lethaby's most positive comments covered engineering, structure and what he saw, through the teachings of Choisy, Viollet-le-duc, and others in France as an appealing, national approach to building. Lethaby's notice of Le Corbusier's point of view is interesting also and his identification of common ground in theory.²⁰¹

As to thoughts about the United States, most commentary came in Lethaby's later writings, when his viewpoint changed to a more accepting attitude about modern developments. This changed viewpoint, as well as an enlarged, international scope of interest in later years, allowed him to recognize the virtues of American and German technological improvements. Also, Lethaby's later writings better show his awareness and concern for the urban fabric and the overall-environment. These subjects became another area for favorable response to German and American activity. The negative sides of Lethaby's perception of Germany and America center around, respectively, the former's propensity to "overdo" things and take matters to extremes and the latter's disagreeable (in his eyes) architectural (but not engineering) developments. Lethaby's objecting to a Beaux Arts orientation and to classicizing architectural trends in contemporary American architecture was noted. As with many remarks about Germany, his comments about America seem motivated by a perception that the United States had gone ahead of England in the building arts and that England should do something to remedy the situation.

²⁰¹Le Corbusier, though Swiss, is most associated with the writing and design contribution he made while based in France.

Many of the comments by Lethaby on activities and architectural thinking beyond England's shores were intended to bring about a betterment in English architecture and associated disciplines. The following chapter will discuss Lethaby's prescriptions for a better architecture in the future—how to achieve an architecture that is modern in the sense Lethaby believed in.

CHAPTER XV

THE MODERN WAY: HOW ARCHITECTURE SHOULD BE, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

This chapter concludes the exposition of the elements of Lethaby's theory. The character of the presentation for this chapter, for the most part, has to do with Lethaby being prescriptive and advocative. It involves positive advice (with some concomitant negative "cautions") on how to improve architecture in the present and future. Lethaby's advice thus characterized (that is, that aspect of his theory) will be discussed in this chapter in part through a mediating idea—the idea (presented mostly as a positive quality) of "being modern"—and in part more directly.

Being "Modern" and How To Achieve It: The Existence of Modern"

In expressing his views on architecture Lethaby frequently brought up issues associated with "modernism" or "being modern." In some instances related terminology surfaces in the titles of Lethaby's papers and in publications. On more general themes, for example, one can cite "Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship" (1906), "Architecture and Modern Life" (1917) and the "Modernism and Design" series (1921).¹ One can also notice amongst his oeuvre of related works, on more specific topics "Modern German Architecture and What We May Learn from It" (1915), "The New Country Palace and Modern Architecture" (1922) and "Modern Church Building" (1931).² Usage of "modern" in publications by Lethaby's contemporaries (domestic and foreign) of course abound (for example, The Modern Home, 1906, edited by Walter S. Sparrow or Lutyens' "What I think of Modern Architecture," in Country Life,

¹ The first was a paper read at the 7th International Congress of Architects, London, (1906) and printed that year as "The Relation of Modern Architecture to Craftsmanship"; the second: from the R.I.B.A Informal Conference, 2 May, 1917, and repr. in Form in... (1922; the last, a series in The Builder, appearing in a number of issues throughout 1921.

² Respectively, a talk given at the Architectural Association (January, 1915) and repr. in Form in...; The Saturday Review (July 29, 1922) pp. 171-192; The Builder, CXI, 6 Feb., 1931, pp. 283-284..

1931). Some others, for example, Statham's Modern Architecture (1897) and Charles Marriott's Modern English Architecture (1924), called attention to Lethaby's views in this context.³

There was, generally, Lethaby believed, a modern "condition," as Lethaby suggested in a comment about the coming of socialism, contained in a letter to his friend Sydney Cockerell in 1916: "...it has come too in a wonderful way, it seems to be more or less a part of every modern mind..."⁴ For modern architecture (of building) to become a reality—the tangible realization of this "modern mind"—change would be necessary. However, this change Lethaby observed a few years later in his series "The Building Art: Theories and Discussions" in The Builder (1923) would be, of necessity, rather more evolutionary than revolutionary:

Of course I know that no one now could all at once scheme a reasonable modern building; we are a hundred years late in experience, our building procedure is a muddle of makeshifts, and our employers have been trained to demand the styles from us as from furnishing shops...no revolutions are possible but I think, or try to hope that "ventilation" of the idea might lead to some slight change of current on the margins of thought and action.⁵

But modern ways, if they were to come, would not be swept in suddenly and unlike the Futurists earlier in the twentieth century, Lethaby would not want it so. Earlier, in 1923, also in the "Theories and Discussions" series in The Builder, Lethaby used sympathetically a quote from another, somewhat earlier architectural writer, Fergusson, suggesting that if there was already a modern architecture in existence—it was not a true one:

All our grand old buildings are now clothed in falsehood, and all our new buildings aim only at deceiving. If this is to continue, architecture in England is not worth writing about; but this work [Fergusson's book] has been written that those who read it may be led to perceive how false and mistaken the principles are on which modern architecture is based...⁶

³ Lutyens' views appeared in Country Life, 20 June, 1931, pp. 775-777. Later writers on "modern" design (for example, Pevsner in Pioneers..., op.cit., first publ. 1936) also often mention Lethaby.

⁴ Letter dated April 16, repr. in Meynell's Friends of a Lifetime (1910), p. 135.

⁵ Part V: "Design in the Period – Styles, or Building Realities?", 4 May, 1923, p. 737.

⁶ Part IV: "Testimony," 6 Apr., 1923, p. 567. The work by Fergusson Lethaby quoted or when it was written is not mentioned. See also, Thomas Graham Jackson's questioning of modern works in Reason in Architecture (1905 lectures at the Royal Academy, London: published 1906), especially page 89, "Modern Architecture Tested."

General Characteristics

Over a decade earlier (1911) Lethaby had offered a general prescription for “modern” building, listing several qualities required for that and giving some suggestions as to how to achieve it:

The modern way of building must be flexible and vigorous, even smart and hard. We must give up designing the broken down picturesque which is part of the ideal or make-believe. The enemy is not science, but vulgarity, a pretence to beauty as second hand. We have to awaken the civic ideal and to aim first at the obvious commonplaces of cleanliness, order, and neatness. Much has to be done, it is a time of beginning as well as of making an end.⁷

In 1923, in “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions” series, another general “list” is offered: “It is because I want poetry, humanity, and even sacredness in building that I see we must be experimental, courageous, serious, real.”⁸ And later in the same series, emphasizing practical considerations Lethaby wrote: “Again, a cautionary postscript must be added. When the words modern and modernism have been used I have meant the real thing, not any pretence that may be called by those names. By modern building, we should mean logical, serviceable, economical and convincing realities, not just another way of ‘making faces.’”⁹ In 1929, being “truly modern” was again described in general terms as being “simply right and reasonable.”¹⁰

More Specific Requirements

Modern work, Lethaby said in 1923, should not vie for attention; visibility should be low: “Whenever a modern ‘architectural composition’ insists like an advertisement, on being seen, the gloom

⁷ Architecture, as in 1955 ed., p. 194.

⁸ Part V, “Design in the Period-Styles or Building Realities?”, The Builder, 4 May, 1923, p. 737.

⁹ Part VII, “Clerks and Artists,” The Builder, 6 July, 1923, p. 18.

¹⁰ “Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder, (1929), p. 252.

of spirit descends.”¹¹ Modern work should also be “unaffected”, Lethaby wrote in 1925.¹² Modernism should be “unconscious.”¹³ Also, novelty was not a criterion for modernism:

“New methods of construction and new purposes are of course perfectly legitimate so far as they are real and right and not the creatures of trick and advertisement. A difficulty is that things new and strange are sometimes overwelcomed as “modernism” So far as it is reasonable in its own place a wooden framed house may be much more truly modern than a work that claims to be modernist. A really modern work under some conditions-as in boat-building-will be quite old fashioned in look.”¹⁴

On the subject of beauty and modernism Lethaby suggested: “...if we try to make beauty the test, it might lead to the discovery that architecture was the work of old builders but not of modern architecture.”¹⁵

Guaranteeing the lack of beauty was, however, also not among the attributes of “modern.” Lethaby wrote of recent buildings “apeing savage works” and cautioned against “a vain imagination that a thing is modern because it is willed to be brutal and blockish.”¹⁶

Modernism and the Past

The past could help, Lethaby believed, in a quest to be modern. In 1925 he wrote: “Right understanding of the ancient world would make us modern and produce a form of building art proper for today.”¹⁷ Two years earlier, in 1923, Lethaby had stressed how old works were really “up-to-the-minute” in their own day: “A German guide was truer than he knew when, in showing off an ancient castle, he

¹¹ “The Building Art-Theories and Discussions,” Part V: “Design in the Period-Styles or Building Realities?,” 4 May, 1923, p.737.

¹² Series on Philip Webb in The Builder, (repub. in book form in 1935, p. 157).

¹³ “The Wit and Wisdom of...,” subtitle: “Lethaby and the Moderns,” The Builder, 15 June, 1932, p. 132. (Original source not given.)

¹⁴ “Renaissance and Modern;” TS, with Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple, p. 5, n.d.

¹⁵ “Origins,” TS at Barnstaple, p. 1, n.d.

¹⁶ “Renaissance and Modern,” op.cit., p. 5, n.d.

¹⁷ Originally in the series on Philip Webb Lethaby wrote for The Builder in 1925, publ. in book form in 1935, p. 157.

remarked, 'Once it was very modern.' Of course, in its time it had been up to date to the last minute."¹⁸

Lethaby believed that modern work was distinct from older work but that, in some respects, there is an attribute of that which is "classic" and that which is "Gothic" which are shared even by "modern work."

In 1908, Lethaby said:

We moderns cannot be classic in one sense, for we are far away from primitive, and inherit no sacred, archaic customs of building. All architecture, however, in civilizations of the modern kind will have, to some extent to be classic, just as they will also have to be Gothic in energy and fearless experiment on the side of structure...Greek and Gothic alike teach that no great architecture can be the light and lax exercise of will and whim."¹⁹

Contemporaries of Lethaby interested in fostering a classical revival and thus, essentially opposite to Lethaby in general point of view about how to use the past, for example in reference to the style revivals, were inclined, however, to agree with him that there is a sort of timelessness in the notion of "classic" although they were perhaps more reluctant to acknowledge the timeless "Gothic" quality Lethaby suggested. Lethaby complicated the issue in another segment of the same passage where, instead of presenting "classic" and "Gothic" as distinct entities, he described a "classic" element in Gothic works: "Some phases of the so-called Gothic Style, such as the Cistercian abbeys in England and the north French cathedrals, notwithstanding all the unlikeness of forms, approach very near to the classic spirit."²⁰ In any event, Lethaby, also in 1908, noted the absence of the "classic" in some modern works: "There is nothing, however, so far away from the classic spirit as some of the modern works which would claim the name of classic..."²¹

¹⁸ "The Building Art: Theories and Discussions" Part V: "Design in the Period Styles, or Building Realities," The Builder, 4 May, 1923, p. 737. Also here Lethaby said: "Archaeology has taught me 'modernism'—that is, reality and no pretence."

¹⁹ "The Theory of Greek Architecture," R.I.B.A.J., 8 Feb., 1908, p. 218. Also in the book Architecture Nature and Magic (originally a series in The Builder in 1928, but publ. in book form only in 1956), Lethaby suggested that future architecture will, in some sense, be "Gothic."

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid.

Modernism and Style

When speaking of present-day or “modern” architecture Lethaby wrote in 1913, “style” is not something one is conscious of; it occurs anyway: “The problem of modern architecture is to set itself to know, to improve, to perfect; when it does that the question of style will solve itself. No one thinks of building a racing yacht in the Spanish Armada style.”²² Another comment by Lethaby, from 1921, also suggested that one should not think about style when pursuing the “modern” way. A reinforcement of the idea, earlier mentioned, that knowledge of the past helps in the present, was also provided, but with clear advice not to allow the past to be an inappropriate influence on the present:

I have studied old art partly to find out what new art must be. As a student of ancient art, I have perhaps earned the right to say that one chief factor to all sound and strong schools of architecture was the modernism of its own day- a being alive and rejoicing in the vivid moment now. By looking back, regretting the past and being sicklied over with wistful thought, one necessarily becomes double-minded and half-dead.”²³

Some modern work, although not appearing to be derived from past styles was actually style-based and to be avoided. In 1923, Lethaby wrote:

Only in today’s paper some illustrations are given of buildings at the Swedish Exhibition at Gothenburg which are labeled “Modernist Architecture and Decoration.” These things are modern only in the sense that they are the latest, but they are in very fact more style conscious than older buildings with the accustomed labels.²⁴

²² “Some Things to Be Done”, *The Builder*, 14 Feb., 1913), p. 207. In 1923, in “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions – Part XI, “Direction and Development,” *The Builder*, 2 Nov., Lethaby wrote: “The modern ‘style architect,’ anxiously organizing mechanical workmanship, to look like old art, with its freedom and masterly accident, is an anachronism” (p. 692).

²³ “Modernism and Design,” *The Builder*, 7 Jan., 1912, p. 31.

²⁴ “The Building Art—Theories and Discussion,” Part VII: “Clerks and Artists” *The Builder*, 6 July, 1923, p. 18. Similarly, in the TS “Renaissance and Modern” at Barnstaple, one finds the admonition not to copy modern “eccentricities” from Scandinavia, Germany and France. Adding “stone-age forms” (related to Cubism?) would produce only another sham-style different from being modern (p. 6). In an undated letter to Harry Peach (R.I.B.A. Collection) Lethaby wrote disparagingly of an illegitimate modernism encouraged by publications of the Design and Industries association: “...and the jazzery jump [things that] the D.I.A. are taking to illustrate as the thing. My double eye! Only another kind of design humbug to pass with a shrug. Ye olde modernist style. We must have a style to copy. What funny stuff art is?”

In 1921, in the “Modernism and Design” series in The Builder Lethaby characterized modernism in architecture as anti-style-based and in 1929 (“Architecture as Engineering,” also published in The Builder) Lethaby was still arguing against linking modernism with style: “Such a sense of pure construction on an intelligible basis would be an anchorage against a present day eddy of setting up ‘Modernism’ as a style, instead of seeking the truly modern, which expands and forms itself.”²⁵

“Modern” Architects and Artists

Certain personalities from the immediate past (all English) were held up by Lethaby as being “exemplary practitioners of modernism” in the sense Lethaby wished it to be understood. In his biography of Webb (originally appearing in The Builder in 1925) Lethaby defended William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones as modern.²⁶ About these two and another close associate, his mentor, Webb, Lethaby wrote: “The works of Morris and of Burne-Jones have often been spoken of as ‘mediaeval’ but they were not intended to be nor were Webb’s. All tried to be modern.”²⁷ In 1925, also, Lethaby characterized Webb as the first modern leader in house building. His house for George Howard, Lethaby wrote, was the first of a modern type of town house.²⁸ Earlier English architects were also linked to the concept of modern. Soane, Lethaby wrote, “had become a modern thinker in building...”²⁹ Pugin was “almost [!] an early modern if ever there were to be moderns in ‘architecture’—he was not afraid of the hard facts of building, and

²⁵ 1921 reference is to p. 751 in The Builder; Part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” 2 Dec. (This point is also suggested earlier in the series in at least two places.) 1929 reference from The Builder, p. 252, 1 Feb. See also in 1929 Lethaby’s letter to Peach (March 6) regretting that the “‘no-style’ modernism” is becoming a style. Alfred Powell in his edition of Scripts and Scraps (1957) supplied this similar quote by Lethaby without giving the original source or date: “Modernism conceived as a style is only inverted archaeology,” p. 50.

²⁶ 1935, repub. as the book Philip Webb, p. 120.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.; Webb clearly thought of himself as a “modern” as shown in this excerpt from his 1902 letter to Sydney Cockerell, written in regard to a projected event at the R.I.B.A in his honor to which Lethaby was planning to contribute: “Of course, any brief thing that Lethaby might wish to write, no hurt to my feelings could come from such, save that he has a tendency to give overdue value to a way-worn modern’s [modern architect’s] strivings,” 20 Nov., 1902, repr. in Meynell’s Friends of a Lifetime, 1940, op.cit., pp. 109-110.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 64.

recognizing the crafts.”³⁰ Waterhouse was also included, in a way: “he aimed at a measured mediaeval modernism.”³¹

Workmanship in “Modern” Architecture

In Lethaby’s series in The Builder of 1923 (“The Building Art: Theories and Discussions”), he made a distinction between older architectural work and the modern based on “workmanship.”: “I would suggest that there is a deep difference between the very nature of ancient and modern architecture. The ancient was necessarily an expansion and experimentation with workmanship; it was an art. The modern is a feat of clerkly organization...”³² Later, in 1923, Lethaby suggested that for modern architecture (at least in the cities) workmanship as previously understood was no longer applicable but what would be was a new kind of scientific emphasis, with buildings thought of as machines:

Modern city builders...require an architecture of calculated precision suitable for our manner of production. The Gothic and all architectures of old types were founded in workmanship; one must seize and make much of the fact that it is foreseen as an exact paper scheme of scientific structure. A modern city architect’s building has to be a stone and brick machine, and when it is that it will have real interest proper to our age.³³

Lethaby’s machine metaphor, it will be noticed, still suggested (unlike Le Corbusier’s) using traditional materials. Also, this metaphor was apparently not applicable for non-urban architectural works; perhaps a Villa Savoye (or “Machine in the Garden”) image was not attractive to Lethaby. Closely allied to the workmanship issue is how the “doers” and “planners” relate to their work. In his pronouncements on modernism, Lethaby’s convictions are drawn from his belief in a past more satisfactory than the present. Concerning modern “doers”, he wrote in 1923: “...modern building must be [that is, will be]

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 66.

³¹ Ibid., p. 74.

³² Part VII: “Clerks and Artists,” p. 16. Similarly, in the same series (Aug. 3) in Part III: “The Two Architectures and Education for Building” Lethaby commented: “...modern building as now exercised is necessarily of a different nature than ancient work. Ancient architecture was seen as workmanship, ours is clerkship.” (p. 176)

³³ Part XI: “Direction and Development,” The Builder (November 2, 1923, p. 692). This was the same year Le Corbusier’s idea of the house as a “machine for living” gained wide currency in Vers une Architecture.

either the outcome of intelligent and interesting labour or of crude labour.”³⁴ A bit later (1925), Lethaby wrote of the necessity in modern work for the “planner” (designer) to be in close contact with the work to be done, indeed attaining mastery of the constructive process itself: “Modern architecture, if we ever have any, will be mastership in building-craft developed out of contact with needs and materials. It won’t be design in the air...”³⁵ Much earlier (1892) Lethaby wrote enthusiastically of constructive “planners” (architects) moving in this direction and urged continued development toward a melding (or re-melding) of “planner” (or thinker) and “doer”:

...many young architects instead of learning building design, throwing up the whole thing in disgust, and taking to landscape painting, are now painting ceilings, painting glass, plaster, and metal working. The next step will be for the architect to associate with himself, not thirty draughtsmen in a back office...but a group of associates with assistants on the building itself and its decoration.³⁶

Following the above excerpt in the same essay, Lethaby acknowledged that this closer alignment of architect and worker could not be expected to occur overnight: “Such a change can only come gradually, but it will answer many questions, the solution of which is essential to the possibility of a real school of modern English architecture and decorative art.”³⁷

Materials

Those materials Lethaby identified as “modern” are not the ones for which retained the greatest enthusiasm. As pointed out in Chapter [?], Lethaby did change his position over time towards one of greater acceptance of such materials as concrete and steel. In later writing, like this from 1918, for example, Lethaby stated: “There is nothing necessarily evil in modern materials...; it is the spirit that tells. I have no love for modernism as such, and fain would hide my head in the sands of the past, but I

³⁴ “Modernism and Design,” Part III: “The Workmanship Basis”, The Builder March 4, 1921, p. 285.

³⁵ Philip Webb, 1935, p. 122, originally appearing serially in The Builder (1925).

³⁶ “The Builders Art and the Craftsman,” in Architecture: A Profession or an Art?, Norman Shaw and T.G. Jackson, eds., p. 168.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

cannot help seeing that the courageous mind will shape even seemingly hopeless materials to its purpose.³⁸ More enthusiasm is revealed in another passage from the same source:

The interest of typically modern structures has not been brought before our eyes in attractive illustrations, we have supposed that they were not “art” and we have turned from them with a sigh because they are not sham Greek or sham Gothic. I must say, however, although all these modern activities frighten me, and I would rather be dealing with rubble and thatch than with concrete and steel, that I have seen much which causes one to look again, in great bridges spanning a valley like a rainbow; in roofs meshed across with thin threads of steel; in tall factory chimneys, great cranes and ships...³⁹

Perceptions By Others

Occasional remarks by contemporaries suggest an ambivalent attitude as to whether Lethaby himself was a “modern.” His architectural work seems to have been thought so, at least by Lawrence Weaver, as he wrote of Lethaby’s “The Hurst” in 1905 in Small Country Houses of Today: “It presents us no spirit of romance but stands confessed a simple modern home.”⁴⁰ Further on, in the same work, Weaver confessed his affinity for Lethaby’s approach to solving contemporary needs in a conservative, tied-to-the-past manner: “Lethaby assumes very rightly that it is not the flavour of architecture we want, or the suggestion of the age, but the intrinsic beauty which comes of building in a reasonable and traditional way to suit modern needs.”⁴¹ The other perception of Lethaby (that is, as an “anti-modern”) also surfaced, for example, in a printed reply (1929 or after) to Lethaby’s refusal to accept the R.I.B.A. Gold Medal: “...actually, it is modern civilization itself and its methods that he was opposed to rather than any section of its activities...”⁴²

³⁸ “A National Architecture,” Part IV: “Modern Materials and Methods” (25 Oct., 1918), The Builder, p. 261.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Volume I, p. 82

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴² After March 6, 1924, the date of Lethaby’s refusal of the Medal; the writer was not identified (R.I.B.A. Biographical folder for Lethaby).

Prescriptions

Lethaby's prescriptions for improvement in the contemporary architectural condition surface throughout his published *oeuvre*. His most well-known books (*Architecture*, 1911, and *Form and Civilization*, 1922) contain them and some of the titles of his writings carried in periodicals connote a prescriptive or instructive tone of what is to be done. For example, from 1913 one finds the short "Some Things to Be Done" appearing in *The Builder* (and in the *Architectural Association Journal*) and later, in the same decade there is "Observations and Suggestions" in *The Builder* of 1919.⁴³ A paraphrasing of Lethaby's talk to the London Central School of Arts and Crafts, "Our Hope for the Future," appeared in March, 1921 in *The Builder* and Lethaby's letter to that periodical entitled "Essentials" later that year⁴⁴. The more comprehensive series, "The Building Art-Theories and Discussions" appeared in several issues of *The Builder* in 1923, and "Aims and Ambitions," part of Lethaby's "Art and Community" series, appeared in the same publication in 1930.⁴⁵

General Advice

In the following paragraphs, various elements from Lethaby's body of advice for the improvement of architecture are brought out more fully. Preceding this, three more general examples are presented to indicate the eclectic nature of his advice. In 1913, for example, in a summary to his article "Some Things To Be Done," Lethaby offered the following list:

1. Improve our English Cities.
2. Differentiate (offer options) in R.I.B.A architectural education courses
3. Record English building customs.

⁴³ The 1913 title in *The Builder* appeared February 14th, the 1919 title appeared September 5th.

⁴⁴ March 25, 1921 (following a March 15th talk) and December 16th, respectively.

⁴⁵ This last on March 7. One can compare the time of appearance of the aforementioned with that of such theoretical works of Le Corbusier as *After Cubism* (*Après Cubism*), 1918, *Vers Une Architecture* (1923 and *Urbanisme* (1927). Lethaby's are the work of an older man, however. When Le Corbusier published the last of the three works cited (*Urbanisme*), he was 36, Lethaby 70. Also, Reginald Blomfield (born 1856), among English architectural writers, wrote his general studies on architecture, *Studies in Architecture* (1905) and *The Mistress Art* (1908) for example, at an age earlier than Lethaby wrote his.

4. See that works of architectural history be done by architects themselves.
5. Produce more books (studies) on the structural side of architecture.
6. Demand a higher quality in architectural painting and decorating.
7. Achieve greater efficiency all around.
8. Study ancient art to see what can be learned from it.
9. Create unencumbered foreign travel stipends for students.
10. Make engineers aware of the “un-aesthetic things they have done.”
11. Use concrete appropriately (and other materials). Also—advise that veneering can be good.
12. Solve [what Lethaby perceived to be] the architectural design problem concerning metal shop fronts.⁴⁶

In a similarly diverse passage in his 1923 article, “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” Lethaby wrote:

My thought is that we should take things as they are for granted, even including our “art” likings and “style” superstitions up to to-day. From tomorrow onward, however, I would direct our efforts towards better building, more intelligent construction, improved planning, the development of perfect types of structures—strong, well-lighted, economical, real; towards the scientific, the vital, and the clear, away from shams, pretences, and imitations... There is no need to seek for more “style,” more accuracy in discriminating the periods; leaves these to shopmen [shopkeepers] and seek rather constructive power, building knowledge, arranging skill, inventive aptitude. Consider at every stage how you can weed out absurdities and costly vanities. Accustom your eye to see the structure through the dressings; be energetic, yet sane and sound.¹

And near the end of his life (1929) Lethaby wrote: “It is simply of tremendous importance that within a few years’ time we shall have men with highly trained constructive powers who will set about developing

⁴⁶ The Builder, (February 14, 1913), pp. 205-207.

¹ Part V, “Design in the Period-Styles or Building Realities?”, The Builder, May 4, 1923, p. 737.

and perfecting a building custom, sound and economical, our of our present medley of trumpery style fashions.”²

The Importance of Theory in Improving Architecture

Lethaby’s principal impulse seems to be one of hostility toward those aspects of architecture that center around or result from theory as opposed to practice. However, his own voluminous writings do, in fact, contribute to the articulation of a theory themselves. The following, in regard to aesthetic theories, illustrates the point of view usually taken by Lethaby:

They doubtless have their right place as a method of contemplation and exercise of the need, but it is suggested very earnestly that such theories and that way of looking at work, are withering to those who are engaged in actual production. Aesthetic philosophers may learn much from cars and air planes and cottages and hay-stacks but the producers of these things must go their own way. It would be dreadful to have an art-haystack. When man anxiously considers appearances and effects, reality and poetry necessarily disappear.³

The last few words of the preceding emphasize that in Lethaby’s view “poetry” cannot be created self-consciously. One of Lethaby’s aphorism published in Scraps and Scraps strikes a similar note: “Analyzing is the first step to annihilation.”⁴ Consider also the following anti-theory (or rather, anti-aesthetics) aphorisms offered by Lethaby:

#44. Esthetics—blither and bunkum about bugaboo.

#90. Esthetics codifies the spontaneous and gives rules for smiling.

#37. Esthetic theory is a philosophy of manner apart from conduct.⁵

However, if one can infer Lethaby’s concurrence with the quotation he offered, in an appreciative context, from Viollet-le-duc, perhaps he was not so unalterably against theory—at least not theory of some kind:

² “Architecture as Engineering,” The Builder (1929), Part I, p. 252.

³ “Origins,” TS, n.d., Barnstaple, p. 2.

⁴ Op.cit.; (Version 1), n.d., aphorism #97. Original source and date of this aphorism was not given.

⁵ Ibid. Original source and date of these not given. 44 and 90 are representative of Lethaby’s more insightful presentations in the aphoristic mode, as opposed to such tautologous remarks as “Only that which is in the line of development can persist.” (This last from “The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby,” The Builder, 8 Jan., 1932, p. 52.)

It may be said that what we call anarchy. absence of method, may be an aspiration and that the art of the future some day will spring, all around from the chaos of style and forms adopted without criticism. This hope is an illusion for the works of the spirit will only develop when they rest on a principle having the rigor of a formula. To rise one must be supported by solid ground.⁶

In a passage in 1923, Lethaby did allude to having a “theory” of sorts, one he maintained was marked by consistency:

My theory of “architecture,” such as it is, has not hastily been formed in some eddy of reaction. Looking back, I see that I have always held such views since the first days of disappointment, when I discovered the difference between old building realities and modern “whims” in the draughtsman styles. I have not been complaining, I have been less concerned with what is than with what will be.⁷

Rational Procedure

One part of Lethaby’s advice concerning architecture in the present and future emphasized the need for rational procedures—the development of sound constructive processes and orderly methods and being “scientific.” In “The Architecture of Adventure” (1910):

...we want to cover the field by a systematic research into possibilities. The possibility of walls and vaults, and of the relations between the walls and the cell, or between one cell and another...it is true, such a training would not include the whole of architecture, but it would, I believe, open the way to the best we can attain.⁸

Later in the same work, Lethaby urged following the “scientific method” as the only way.⁹ The next year, in Architecture, Lethaby also observed that what was needed is a science of architecture.¹⁰ Among a

⁶ “Viollet-le-Duc as Teacher,” MS, not paginated. It is not clear whether the underlining in his quotations from Viollet is the latter’s or Lethaby’s. Original source in Viollet’s writing and date not given.

⁷ “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” Part XII: “Words or Realities? And Positive Architecture,” The Builder, 7 Dec., 1923, p. 891.

⁸ Repub. in Form in... (1922), p. 90-91. Orig. an address given at the R.I.B.A., 16 April, 1910.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

number of points articulating what must be done in the future, Lethaby cited the need for "...a new science of building morphology," a new system of classifying structure (buildings) by essential types and investigating walls, columns, etc., as building components one by one. Stylistic classification would, however, not need to be pursued (that had already been done, he claimed). The past could be important in this effort, however, as one could learn from old types.¹¹ In "Some Things To Be Done" (1913), in discussing structure (used here to mean construction, in general) Lethaby stressed reason and research. In regard to shop fronts:

...the modern shop problem calls for some reasonable solution...my general feeling is that it should be dealt with as a mechanical problem which has to be beautifully furnished...the main bones of the window area might be a metal frame, obviously doing its work...we want to settle down to certain lines of frank and reasonable structure.¹²

Or, more generally Lethaby wrote: "...we need to be fed with researches on the structural side of architecture; especially we want a type of book which shall be a real study of building possibilities, not exhausting chapters on brick bond, lead flashings, and curtail steps."¹³ Also, in describing a new variant of traveling studentship that he advocated (as previously mentioned), orderly recording was supported: "What is wanted is a free mind to observe and record valuable ideas in building and town life—the noting of pleasant ways of doing things."¹⁴

Later in the decade, in his article "The Spirit of Rome..." (1917) Lethaby stressed, among other criteria, a need for emphasis on rational consideration in regard to civil (public?) architecture: "...fitness for function, soundness of structure, economy, the need for good lighting, suitable access for repairs, and

¹⁰ Orig. 1911. Information taken from 1955 reprint, p. 192. Some of the reserve toward science characteristic of the orthodox arts and crafts position is evident, however, in this comment: "What are we going to do with science now that we have got it, or rather what is science going to do now that it has got us?" ("Town Redemption," MS, n.d., not paginated, apparently written after the start of World War I; with Lethaby's papers at Barnstable.)

¹¹ Ibid., p. 190-192.

¹² The Builder, 14 Feb., 1913, p. 207.

¹³ Ibid., p. 206.

¹⁴ Ibid.

cleaning.”¹⁵ In this same article he also wrote that a present requisite for architecture was the need to be practical, and he emphasized architectural development as a “structural [constructional] art.”¹⁶ Similarly, the same year in “Education of the Architect,” Lethaby urged concentrating on “structural perfection.”¹⁷ This rational emphasis is shown the next year also in a comment in the series “A National Architecture”: “Whenever our buildings are again designed for their purpose as directly as a fiddle, a gun or even a motor car or air plane they will be romantic once more.”¹⁸ In the next decade, in 1923, Lethaby stressed following common sense and offered this more detailed prescription: “We need to have education and thought founded on a positive method of design and appreciation—something of the kind which may be suggested by the classification which follows:

1. Structural mathematics, geometry, and mechanics; common needs and planning;
2. Materials and workmanship; living experience of the working [workman?] and use of stone, wood, brick, iron, plaster, etc.; local building customs and recipes;
3. Constructive factors, walls, piers, floors, arches, domes, vaults, buttresses, windows, skylights, staircases, chimneys, etc.;
4. Organic arrangement and appreciation of weight; balance and stability in the arrangement of parts or cells, and efficiency in services;
5. Common conditions and circumstances, neighbourhood, sites, sun, aspect, air, dryness, durability, lighting, warming, sanitation, economy, ease of access for repair and cleaning; labour-saving in maintenance (very important);
6. Types and species, public buildings, houses, shops, etc. order compactness, intelligibility;

¹⁵ Architectural Review, Vol. XLI, January, 1917, p. 3. An atypical remark regarding these utilitarian considerations is an early one in “Of the Motive” (AA Notes, 1889, p. 23-24, wherein Lethaby advised avoiding an overemphasis on “utility.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁷ Talk given at the R.I.B.A. (1917). Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 122.

¹⁸ Part IV, “Modern Materials and Methods,” The Builder, 25 Oct., 1918, p. 261.

7. Finishing and furniture, employment of contributory arts, painting, sculpture and other forms of fret workmanship; combinations and lay-out; contact and agreement with builders, engineers and craftsman; experiment, development, invention.”¹⁹

In 1925, in Lethaby’s study of Webb, there is again the emphasis on the rational (the modern architect must accept a rational theory of art and develop the consequences) and in 1929 one finds a re-iteration of his words from the previous decade concerning perfection of structure as a central idea in architecture: “There is only, it appears to me, one possible ground for such a general enthusiasm in architecture or building—the idea of perfect and elegant structure.”²⁰ Lethaby’s advice for a new type of construction, offered near the end of his life in 1930, displayed similar emphases to that of the 1923 list, with perhaps even more weight, by exclusion of other considerations, on the rational, practical, utilitarian side of architecture: “We very much need a whole new type of building literature which will set out the subjects with which we deal on the plane of general ideas.” Some of the headings suggested under the general title of Positive Building Procedures:

1. Mathematics, building geometry, and mechanics.
2. Building practice, locality, materials, customs, workmanship.
3. Arrangement, planning, organization.
4. Elements or powers in construction, wall(s), roof, floors, archs, vaults, chimney(s).
5. Structure, ‘cells’ and combinations, morphology, balance, stability.
6. Site, aspect and sun, dryness, light (natural and artificial), heating, etc.
7. Types and species, cottage, factory, school, etc., etc.

¹⁹ “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” Part XIII: “Words or Realities and Positive Architecture,” The Builder, 7 Dec., 1923. The comment on common sense from p. 890, the rest from p. 891. The words are quoted verbatim. However, in the published articles they are offered as a paragraph instead of list form as presented above and are not numbered.

²⁰ Respectively, from Philip Webb (1935 repub. in book form of Lethaby’s 1925 series on the same subject in The Builder, p. 85, and the letter entitled “Architecture, Nature and Magic” in the Correspondence section of The Builder, (4 Jan., 1929), p. 7.

8. Durability, economy, repair, and access for repair and cleaning. Those considerations, again, need anxious thought. A whole theory of ‘architecture’ might be drawn out from such never-enough considered data.”²¹

Fitness, Economy, Simplicity, Clarity, Efficiency

Fitness, Lethaby wrote in 1889 in commenting on the usage of knowledge from the past, should be an important aim: “...the power to embody the old principle to the ever-new conditions, distinguishing and setting aside that which does not form part of the living thought of the time, which is the true objective [i.e. should be] of the true architect.”²² Fitness, he wrote a few years later in 1892, helped equalize the value of the humble structure with that of greater pretension: “It was this character of fitness and relation that made cottage things quite different from but quite as beautiful as those in the squire’s house.”²³ In this 1892 writing as well, simplicity was identified as another virtue; it would give dignity.²⁴ A similar quality, clarity, is implied in this comment some years later (1917): “This is very much the same problem which modern minds have to solve: to remove ‘architecture’ from being a boggy mystery, which adepts write about as experts in table-turning might on their art, into just modern building—frank, sound, and joyous.”²⁵ In this 1917 writing, economy and efficiency are also identified as important for modern architecture:

Economy...is a large leading idea which might be held to embody—when “rightly understood”—nearly all we want in architecture... If we would have a true architecture we

²¹ “Art and the Community,” Part III: “Aims and Ambitions,” The Builder, 7 March, 1930, p. 487. Still another Lethaby “prescription,” emphasizing the traditional and practical, is the following (taken from “The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby,” publ. 8 Jan., 1932, in The Builder (orig. source in Lethaby’s writings and date not given): “The great architectural question of to-day is how to build common damp-proof walls; simple solid floors; and above all, roofs better than the thin slate lids we are accustomed to. We need neither Greek nor Gothic, but an efficient method...” (p. 52).

²² “Of the Motive in Architectural Design,” A.A. Notes, Vol. IV, No. 32, November 1889, p. 24.

²³ Simple Furniture (originally published 1892 and repub. in 1922 as Dryad Leaflet #5, publ. by Dryad Handicrafts, Leicester, England, p. 3.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “The Spirit of Rome...,” Architectural Review, Vol. XLI, January, 1917, p. 2.

must substitute understandable modern idea like economy, soundness, efficiency, for all this twaddle about the appearance which, after all the talk, do not appear in our streets.²⁶

Lethaby defined economy at one point in this last-quoted effort as “cheapness with beauty.” The ideal of economy was “to obtain full value for the outlay of power, counted either as labour or money; it implies the science of effort, and reverence for all workmanship.”²⁷ Citing historical examples, Lethaby wrote that “cheapness with beauty” would be the “Greek ideal of the highest art.”²⁸ Ancient Roman buildings, he observed, were examples of the truly economical—for they lasted.²⁹ In Lethaby’s article the next year (1918) one again encounters the notion that economy and efficiency, this time linked to “service,” were important in improving architecture: “...economy would go far to open a path to progress. Efficiency and economy would be as good a guiding maxim as any, for in truth the essence of economy is not mean saving, it is rather a maximizing of service.”³⁰

Agreement/Difference

The agreement/difference caption introduces a discussion of several other notions Lethaby thought important to improving architecture. Some of these involve the idea of commonality, universality, agreement, consistency and submission to the forces of tradition. The others imply somewhat opposite concerns such as novelty, originality and experimentation. Lethaby commented in 1890, taking issue with a contention by fellow architectural writer James Fergusson (1808-1886), that the activities of “architecture” and “building” are different. Architecture, Lethaby wrote in this article “Cast Iron,” implied something universal in the constructive arts—it “must affect even the most lowly building.”³¹ The

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “A National Architecture,” Part II: “The Art of Construction,” The Builder, 11 Oct., 1918, p. 229.

³¹ Journal of the Society Arts, February 14, 1890, p. [?] 2.

building efforts of a certain age, at least, (even a sophisticated one) must contain some common principle,

Lethaby wrote a number of years later, in 1908:

It has sometimes been doubted whether a true school of art can be maintained in a highly developed and critical civilization, but the study of Greek art seems to give a hopeful answer, although all hinges, now as then, on the possibility of finding a basis of agreement. If there is no general consensus as to the way in which work should be done, there is no mould for development to run in, but only little spasms of fashion.³²

At the beginning of the next decade, in 1910, a similar remark can be found in Lethaby's "The Architecture of Adventure." There he said that architecture will only be produced if there is common and sustained agreement as to criteria."³³ In the same work, however, and somewhat at odds with the aforementioned statement, Lethaby stated that there is no one perfect school of art (that is, there has not been) and that there are possibly an infinite number of conceivable perfections.³⁴ Later in the decade (1917), the desirability of arriving at definite standards commonly agreed upon was again stressed: "Some approach to agreement as an admitted basis for criticism, other than that of expressing mere vague and contradictory opinions with great confidence, would at once do something towards setting up a development in building 'style'."³⁵ In the early 1920s, as part of Lethaby's rebuttal to the arguments Geoffrey Scott had advanced in The Architecture of Humanism (1914), he wrote rather pessimistically (on the value of consistency): "It hardly comforts me to see that Mr. Scott's demonstrations will not last...for our flighty inconstancy remains, and I doubt if anything but some stern necessity will modify that."³⁶ Later, in 1929, arguing for a common basis centered around constructional considerations rather than styles, Lethaby wrote:

³² "The Theory of Greek Architecture," R.I.B.A. Journal, 8 Feb., 1908, p. 218.

³³ As repub. in Form in... (1922), p. 68.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

³⁵ "The Spirit of Rome," Architectural Review, Vol. XLI, January, 1917, p. 3.

³⁶ "The Building Art: Theories and Discussions," Part VI: "The Architecture of the Past," The Builder, 1 June, 1923, p. 893.

...if our work as architects is not expressive of much beyond cultural anarchy, we should seek some common ground for common effort. In seeking for such agreement, I would say this: in the present year, 1929, we must go on doing exactly what we do and in the ways we like. Next year, however, will be 1930, and twenty years more will be 1950, when many of our gifted young men will be working: what ought we to aim at doing then? Shall it be Gothic, with more exact mediaeval 'feeling' for churches, and Grand Manner with a "touch" of the Baroque for Business; or shall it be a little more, just a little more, of structural perfection?³⁷

The insistence on seeking a common base for architecture also appeared the next year in Lethaby's series "Art and the Community": "Our great task is to set about perfecting common things, to establish a custom of building excellence; for too long we have looked at architecture as something grand and remarkable, forgetting that it must glow from below from a widespread common base, or that it will necessarily wither away."³⁸

Some portion of a common base for an improved architecture might come, Lethaby thought, from establishing continuity with the past, through some continuation of traditional or customary practice. He suggested this in regard to the usage of the material, cast-iron, in 1890; traditional use, he said, should be the guide in the future.³⁹ But this idea of a common basis supplied by customary or traditional use was to be balanced by another necessity for contemporary architecture, experiment. The idea that architecture should be both customary (a reflection of traditional needs) and experimental (a response to changing needs) was expressed in 1910, in "The Architecture of Adventure."⁴⁰ However, even thirteen years earlier, in the article "Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades," the dual approach of continuity with the old and experiment with the new had already been voiced. Lethaby had stressed then

³⁷ Letter by Lethaby to The Builder publ. in the Correspondence section, 4 Jan., 1929, under the title "Architecture, Nature and Magic," p. 7.

³⁸ Part III: "Aims and Ambitions," The Builder, 7 March, 1930, p. 488.

³⁹ "Cast Iron and Its Treatment for Artistic Purposes," Journal of the Society of Arts, 14 Feb., 1890, p. 280.

⁴⁰ Repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 67.

that experimentation in materials and engineering was essential.⁴¹ Later, in 1897, in addressing a related problem (education in the crafts) Lethaby also argued that experimentation was essential, giving the example of the testing of materials and of performing engineering tests on the capacities of vaulting.⁴²

In Lethaby's "The Architecture of Adventure" he again had stated the need to experiment, but only for solutions to "known needs" and in a more poetic but related passage about breaking away from the unfruitful though comfortable pursuit of the habitual: "We might have thus to give up hugging the coasts of the known, to sail boldly forth under the stars. Thus, and thus only for us, may we enter again upon the Architecture of Adventure."⁴³

In Architecture (1911), Lethaby also wrote that experiment must be brought back in architecture.⁴⁴ Experiment is also stressed a decade later (in the "Modernism and Design" series) among such other Lethabian emphases as the one calling for work experience for architects instead of drawing: "I should like, in the future and as soon as might be, to put practice in the place of paper, the works in the place of the schools, experiment in the place of 'style,' and building in place of 'architecture.'"⁴⁵ Experiment should not be used in the service of novelty, however. Following Webb, whom he cited for support, Lethaby suggested in 1923 that the aim of architecture should be, as much as possible, to blend in and not stand out: "I would commend to your consideration the admirable saying of the late Mr. Philip Webb: 'I am never satisfied until my things [buildings and other objects] are commonplace'."⁴⁶ In the same series, as part of Lethaby's defense against Geoffrey Scott's accusations, he explained how originality (a more acceptable and serious relative of novelty) is desirable in modern architecture but that its nature does not derive from a motivation to avoid resemblance to past styles:

⁴¹ "Technical Education in Architecture and the Building Trades," Journal of the Society of Arts, 23 July, 1897, p. 855. (Orig. an address given the same year to the Technical Education Congress.)

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "The Architecture of Adventure," as repr. in Form in... (1922), p. 91.

⁴⁴ As in the 1955 reprint, p. 193.

⁴⁵ Part X: "Planning, Composition and Block-form," The Builder, 7 Oct., 1921, p. 452.

⁴⁶ "The Building Art-Theories and Discussions," Part VII: "Clerks and Artists," 6 July, 1923, p. 18.

[Scott wrote] "...of the existing chaos of opinion;" ...some teach of architecture that—it must be "traditional" and "scholarly" that is, resembling what has already been done by Greek, Roman, Mediaeval or Georgian architects; or it must be "original" and "spontaneous," that is, it must be at pains to avoid resemblances; or it must strike some happy mean between these two opposites; and so forth indefinitely." Now, here again I feel a verbal difficulty. I am one of those who would say that a building should be(!) original and spontaneous in the sense of being carried along in a flowing current like other forms of modern activity. Spontaneous to me does not mean "being at pains to avoid resemblances"—air ship building is not at pains to avoid anything but crashing.⁴⁷

Standardization

Allied with Lethaby's other thoughts on "rational procedure" are his views on standardization. Properly understood, this could be a good thing, he wrote in 1923, the same year Le Corbusier had asserted standardization's benefits in Vers une Architecture:

There is a quite modern word I should like to consider: this is "standardization,"...It occurs to me that there may be two ways of thinking about it; to suppose straight off that it means turning out tens of thousands of buildings, planned in a Government office, all exactly alike, and bad at that; or to understand it to mean the development of types, the drawing away from waste and anarchy in production, and the attempt to reach real and rational solutions. In the latter sense, I am all for standardization.⁴⁸

In this same article series, Lethaby gave examples of standardized types (classes) in shop design and went on:

We need something of the sort for our buildings; first the grouping; and then the detailed development of reasonable working parts, doors, fireplaces, windows. How do we "design" a house now? Almost as if one had never been built before; in any case, there is no large body of experience readily available; the necessary services, like heating, water, and light supply, are ever fresh surprises and every architect feels that he must "design" any nice "details," like doors, stairs, and chimneypieces, all over again, even to the "mouldings,"⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid. Part VI: "The Architecture of Riot," 1 June, 1923, p. 892.

⁴⁸ "The Building Art: Theories and Discussions," Part XII: "Words or Realities? And Positive Architecture," The Builder, December 7, 1923, p. 891. Le Corbusier's thoughts on the subject were published earlier in periodicals, however, and are published in revised form in Vers Une Architecture, 1922.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

This last statement shows a significant departure from the Arts and Crafts inclination toward providing details in response to the unique circumstances of a particular commission or the particular client involved. But as Lethaby continued, he apparently thought a kind of standardization which could respond to particularity of circumstance as well as changing needs would be possible:

If we follow need and reason, there should be no fear of dreary monotony, differences of site, individual requirement, and development will arise and give all necessary variation. The wrong idea of standardising suggests low level fixity; the right manner of seeking to standardise—it is no paradox to say—brings about unceasing movement by experiments to make perfect. Without the standardising aim we are for ever subject to whims and casting back on our track; with it, we might hope to bring some order out of the present chaos of anarchy, whim and vulgarity.⁵⁰

The Past

However far the present-day anarchy, whim and vulgarity may have extended into the past, even older architecture was seen to be an important guide (if properly used) for the present and future. In 1892, in his essay “The Builders’ Art and the Craftsman,” Lethaby clearly saw the past as still being relevant. Joined with “nature” and “brotherhood,” he wrote: “...we have only to get to work with the past for our guidance, nature for our inspiration and the brotherhood of the craft for praise, and a true art will as spontaneously spring up as lilies in spring.”⁵¹ One must, Lethaby thought, be careful to draw on the past in the right ways, however. As Peter Davey said of Lethaby’s book Architecture Mysticism and Myth published a year before Lethaby’s essay: “...Lethaby was quite clear that man’s past perceptions of the macrocosmos should not be a guide to the future of architecture.”⁵² In the 1891 book Lethaby closed his Introduction by portraying the aims of past art (and architecture) as malevolent, unlike those in later times, although there would be commonalities between past and future:

What, then, will be art of the future be? The message will still be of nature and man, or order and beauty, but all will be sweetness, simplicity, freedom, confidence, and light; the other is

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Publ. in Architecture, A Profession or an Art? (1892), op.cit., p. 169.

⁵² The Architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1980, p. 56.

past, and well is it, for its aim was to crush life: the new, the future is to aid life and train it, “so that beauty may flow into the soul like a breeze.”⁵³

In the next decade, in his article “The Theory of Greek architecture” (1908), Lethaby wrote that he was interested in the question of how the classical spirit could be applied to modern problems. In the ensuing discussion, however, he never seems to have arrived at an answer to this question, although he did clarify to some extent what not to apply from Ancient Greek theory.⁵⁴ A few years later one can find other evidence that Lethaby thought that drawing on the past was important for proceeding into the future. In 1913, again emphasizing references to classical times but using non-architectural examples in art, he said:

...we need a point of view from which to study ancient art fruitfully... How Watts [a Victorian English painter?] learnt of the great Italians is well known, but many of his works are inspirations from the Greek. Thus a beautiful study which he called “Pygmalion’s Wife” was painted from a marble head and shoulders at Oxford... The noble horse and rider in Kensington Gardens was quite evidently suggested by the horsemen of the Parthenon frieze... Burne-Jones again and again took what he wanted from Greek, Byzantine and Medieval art. One specially interesting case is his “Seven Days of Creation” which was an offshoot from the mosaics in the narthex of St. Mark’s, Venice; these themselves had been taken from a Vth century book, the celebrated Cotton genesis. Everything is ours which we are qualified to steal; it is only weakling theft which is mistaken. Art has Spartan virtues.⁵⁵

⁵³ Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, (1891), as per 1975 repr., p. 8. It isn’t known by this author who Lethaby is quoting in the last phrase.

⁵⁴ R.I.B.A. Journal, 8 Feb., 1908, p. 214.

⁵⁵ “Some Things to be Done,” The Builder, 14 Feb., 1913, p. 206. Basil Ward, in a 1957 symposium on Lethaby, noted that Lethaby did “look backward for visions of guidance and for standards to follow” as well as taking “a firm stand in the present.” (“William Richard Lethaby—1857-1931, Part III “The Whole Man,” R.I.B.A.J., April, 1957, p. 222.)

Medieval works, as well as classic ones were important for the future, Lethaby believed, if properly utilized. He stated, for example, that “Organic Gothic” was the millennial building theory and referred to a “Gothic” future. Thus, some distillate of this period must have had, for Lethaby, enduring value.⁵⁶

In 1923, as part of Lethaby’s defense against Geoffrey’s Scott’s charges leveled against his way of thinking about architecture, Lethaby made several interesting points concerning how the past could be used in the present and future. In defending himself against Scott’s Romantic fallacy, Lethaby claimed a different definition for romance and romanticism than Scott and stated that he was not one of those whom Scott had charged as seeking succor in the “extinct” and “remote.” Regarding Scott’s Romantic Fallacy:

...we are told [by Scott]: “Romanticism may be said to consist in a high development of poetic sensibility towards the remote as such. It idealises the distant both of time and place; it identified beauty with strangeness... Its most typical form is the cult of the extinct.” If that be so, indeed, I agree entirely. What can reasonable architecture have to do with the cult of the extinct? And yet...is not the word [romantic] being used out of its received meaning? Skeat says, “Romance”: (a) ‘a fictitious narrative’; (b) the vulgar tongue used by the people in everyday life as distinguished from the Latin of books.” I look now in Larousse and find the following regarding “modern literature and art”:

“Romanticism; the doctrine of the writers who, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, freed themselves from the rules of composition and style established by the classical writers. It honored the Middle Ages, indigenous antiquities and foreign literature; it was characterized by the renaissance of lyricism by imagination and individualism. In art a reaction against the classic art of the school of David.”

As understood by Wordsworth, romantic meant the common, the local, and the living. According to Mr. Kipling, “Romance brought up the nine-fifteen.” I shall still feel free to use the word in this tradition without being subject to the fallacy of the remote and extinct.⁵⁷

⁵⁶See, for example, “The Wit and Wisdom...” Part I (8 Jan.) of a series in The Builder in 1932, p. 53, in reference to “Organic Gothic” (orig. source and date in Lethaby’s oeuvre not given) and Scips and Scraps, Alfred Powell, ed., (1956), p. 28, in reference to a “Gothic” future (orig. source and date in Lethaby’s oeuvre not given).

Halsey Ricardo, a kindred spirit of Lethaby’s in the Arts and Crafts Movement similarly stressed learning from the past in his talk to the R.I.B.A. in 1920: “Study of old work is essential, since work is the embodiment and outcome of a long train of experiment and experience: one has not only to analyse the past methods of construction, the choice of materials, but one must master also the social conditions of the time, since these had [have] a vital bearing on the building.” (from Ricardo’s “On Citizenship,” as reported, possibly paraphrased, in the R.I.B.A.J., 24 Jan., 1920, p. 120. Lethaby was in the audience for the talk and some of his comments published.)

Lethaby did not share Scott's enthusiasm for the Renaissance or related later developments in art and did not see much to be learned from these. Some insight into why this might be so is gained from another passage from the article just cited, wherein Lethaby rebutted Scott on points attending the latter's concept of the "Mechanical Fallacy." In the process, the Renaissance itself is not presented attractively. Lethaby, in reference to the Mechanical Fallacy, began by quoting from Scott's book, from Scott's notes on points which were then expanded upon:

"Beauty cannot be identified with sincere construction. But perhaps both are necessary? Difficulties of this view Architecture defined as the vivid expression of structural function. But the vividness must be a matter of appearance and the function a matter of fact, while the converse is not necessary. Renaissance takes advantage of this distinction; it appeals from logic to psychology... The mechanical argument based on confusion between structure and the effect of structure on the human spirit. Renaissance architecture is structure idealized." I need not argue this a length; I will only say I want the fact instead of the appearance of fact every time; the fact of a dinner, the fact of a strong ship, the fact of a painting instead of a textured oleograph. Some shopkeepers (like the Renaissance), are said to trade on the difference between appearance and fact, but this exercise of art is not counted only on appeal from logic to psychology.⁵⁸

Scott and Lethaby also disagreed on Ruskin's relevance and significance, and in Lethaby's reply to Scott on this point (in the same 1923 article series), the following was offered: "The author...contradicts and tries to smile Ruskin away, but it is with a courteous gesture, realizing the size of the man."⁵⁹

Style

Lethaby's general fault-finding with style-based architecture has been documented in Chapter VII. Some reinforcement to that (mainly from the 1920s) is given through a discussion of some additional statements by Lethaby about the role style-based architecture should play in his view, in the present and future. In 1921 he wrote: "For the present, I perceive there is a demand for advertisement 'architecture' and for this a fat commercial imitation of 'Renaissance' may be appropriate enough. Granting so much,

⁵⁷"The Building Art: Theories and Discussions," Part VI: "The Architecture of Riot," The Builder, 1 June, 1923, p. 892.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 893.

however, I do not see why all the building arts of the country should be chained to such a chariot!⁶⁰ Two years later, in the series “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions,” a similar tone of resigned toleration (temporarily) of the “styles” in contemporary architecture can be noted: “If you don’t see yet how it is possible to make a scheme for a building without its being in some sham style, let the sham element be as little as possible and the human and logical elements as large a part as may be.”⁶¹ Similarly, two months later, in the same series Lethaby said: “We may hope to continue to find a place for architecture which pretends to be ‘style,’ but I believe and hope that such bluff stuff will not last much longer.”⁶² Again, near the end of the year, Lethaby described two types of personnel active in the building arts which would be useful for the future and then stressed the insalubrious effects that “style-architecture” would have on both:

All will probably agree that youths of two differing types of mind would be specially useful in modern building art. Those with constructive, experimenting, inventive faculties, and those with a turn towards workmanship, making and doing. Now the modern thought if “style-architecture” must deeply injure both of these; it is a rock which will break both of them, while the actor and hair-dresser kinds of minds will find little to object to. The mathematical and scientific youth will find himself in a world founded on inverted definitions, where art means clerkship and archaeology, design mean copying, style means pretence, theory abounding rhetoric.⁶³

Lethaby continued:

My modest enquiry is only this: in the present circumstances might not a slight, even very slight, lessening of the enthusiasm for “featuring” the period style be advisable... Shall we increase the number and depth of the fashionable horizontal grooves in the masonry frontages? Shall we enlarge the curious triangular hats which we put over windows, although

⁶⁰“Modernism and Design,” Part X: “Planning, Composition and Block-form,” The Builder, 7 Oct., 1921, p. 452. A much earlier comment on the relevancy of past “styles” was offered in 1889. The true objective of the true architect, he wrote then in “Of the Motive in Architectural Design,” was not an “interweaving of the shreds of past art, however clever...” (Architecture Association Notes, Vol. IV, No. 32, November 1889, p. 24).

⁶¹Part V: “Design in the Period Styles or Building Realities?,” The Builder, 4 May, 1923, p. 737.

⁶²Op.cit., Part VII: “Clerks and Artists,” 6 July, 1923, p. 17. Concern about “styles” was seen by Lethaby as a significant obstacle to improvement in architecture in a passage posthumously printed (or reprinted) in “The Wit and Wisdom of Lethaby” (The Builder, January 8, 1932: “...all our preoccupations about styles block the way not only to high utility but to high expression.” (p. 52).

⁶³Op.cit., Part XI—“Direction and Development,” 2 Nov., 1923, p. 692.

people are uncertain whether they are called pedestals or pediments, and nervously enquire what they are for? Shall we dangerously support still more and large “columns” (don’t they call them?), ranging them along frontages like full bottles on a shelf of architectural specimens?⁶⁴

As part of the same 1923 series also, Lethaby did, as mentioned earlier, defend against the changes brought by Geoffrey Scott in his books, The Architecture of Humanism, and shifted to the offensive in attacking the book. Inexplicably, for this is the only response to Scott by Lethaby in print known to this author, Lethaby’s words on the subject come almost a decade after the books’ publication. Here might be pointed out first Lethaby’s concern that Scott’s book not be favorably received in terms of its potential for present and future architectural application. Second, related to Lethaby’s belief in the general inapplicability (not to mention lack of value in its own time) of the Renaissance style in architecture, there are his doubts as to the desirability of a reapplication of this idiom, either as understood by Scott or by Lethaby. Offered first, Lethaby’s general explanation for criticizing Scott’s book (and why he called his response “The Architecture of Riot”):

In special pleading, a question—begging title is very helpful, and I set my title (whether itself question-begging or not the reader must judge) against Mr. Geoffrey Scott’s Architecture of Humanism, as a better description of the same thing—the baroque Italian architecture of the seventeenth century. I am drawn to speak of Mr. Geoffrey Scott’s book because of the evidence that students are finding in it, or hoping to find, “a theory of aesthetics” that falls in with what they are taught in the ateliers about “Architecture”...⁶⁵

Lethaby revealed his feelings about Scott’s book directly in stating that in commenting on the book, he intended to be fair—“so far as one can be to what is entirely antipathetic.”⁶⁶ In a following passage, Lethaby made clear that one should not use this book to support another style revival and that he recognized (feared) that it had the potential to be viewed (probably was being viewed) as a guide for the present:

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵“Part VI—The Architecture of Riot,” 1 June, 1923, p. 892.

⁶⁶Ibid.

It may be said that the book is an appreciative examination of an historical movement, and that it does not teach (as some readers appear to think) that we should at once set about imitating Italian baroque in Leeds and Liverpool and try to add to all our other shams a sham seventeenth century style of shams. Mr. Scott indeed, calls his work “a study in the history of taste” and I gladly agree that in a review of the past all that may be should be understood sympathetically but we cannot quite put out of mind the fact that a history of the past can hardly be apprehended as other than a present lesson.⁶⁷

Lethaby finished this sequence in his best mailed-fist wrapped-in-velvet glove style: “Architects who are interested in theories and ‘the art of putting things’ should read this pleasantly written book. It makes clear, I think, that there are no reasons for approving baroque ‘art’ unless one wants to and only bad reasons for it if one does want to approve.”⁶⁸ In the same response to Scott’s book, Lethaby took exception to Scott’s employment of the term humanism and then cited the irrelevancy of the kind of architecture Scott had supported in this book by (disparagingly) describing the nature of the patronage that brought this architecture into being and how inapplicable (and inappropriate) this was for his own age. On the use of “humanism” in Scott’s book, Lethaby wrote:

First, there is much ambiguity in the use of the work “humanism” itself, for it is so close to human that it seems to carry the suggestion that that must be the thing for us. Further, however, I doubt whether it is rightly-used, in even a technical sense, of the era dealt with; the word is usually applied to the early schools of the Renaissance, Pico da la Mirandola, and Erasmus.⁶⁹

And, on the appreciation of the Baroque (including his own) Lethaby continued:

Having emptied from our great historical art all that is most human, so that we may fill up the void with this alleged “humanism” instead, it is then assumed that the way is open for “delight.” But is it? Who is to feel this delight? I cannot help it, but I don’t; I feel dulled, bored and sick. For a proper appreciation of the elements of delight in this baroque, I see that we should have to produce all over again a special class to whom the showy stuff would appear like “art”—a peculiar breed of Italian cardinals borne about in crimson palanquins, Louis XIV with his court, and our Charles II. The picture requires its appropriate frame and I doubt it if is worth it. It appears once more that architecture is a form of social structure and that all the “fallacies” so carefully swept out of the front door insist on returning through the

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 893.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 892.

window as elements in the problem of “delight”... One may also doubt whether in the near future there will be a long series of patrons of the Louis XIV-type calling for fashionable footmen architects to supply their capricious delights.⁷⁰

More generally, a few years later, Lethaby apparently saw no marked movement to rid architecture of the historical “styles,” Baroque or otherwise. This time the problem was identified as lying with the clients: “...our employers have been taught to expect ‘style’ and ‘grandeur’ from us, and till they are better instructed, or poorer, they will have it so.”⁷¹

Ornament

Closely related to the issue of using historic “styles” in contemporary architecture is the question of the nature of ornament. A good conceptualization of what Lethaby had in mind was provided in 1918, in his series, “A National Architecture.” Here he argued for a juxtaposition, in architectural ornament, of areas (of wall) treated in traditional ways along with unornamented ones. This approach was the kind of combination that many Arts and Crafts architects, Voysey, for example, and Lethaby himself realized in their built work. Ornament associated with the historical styles should be eschewed:

This would probably be enough, we don’t want our building worried all over, we want richness and colour and food for thought, but we also need bareness and relief and peace. Or a set of fine sculptured panels, about something, might be set low down where they could really be seen and loved—really loved, not tolerated or hated. Or an inscription boldly saying something in clear, strong letters might be cut in in a band high up, or in a large panel, or again, this might be a mosaic of gold letters on blue, or black letters on gold—not timid or frightened and non-committal, but an inscription to lift up our hearts. Or between the windows might be a set of really handsome medallions in glazed earthenware, but again, with some meaning and intention—surely we are real enough to have meanings and intentions. Considering the problems of finishing in some ways as these, and forgetting the Gothic, Elizabethan, and Italian styles, there is no end to what might be done in a perfectly frank, reasonable and healthy way. If such a method were customary, architecture would at once stand out again as a sincere and manly art and gradually drop more and more of the powder

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 893. Architecture (and art) in his own time, Lethaby thought, should respond to a different kind of patronage. There should be an architecture more commonly accessible. This anti-elitist inclination of Lethaby extends to participation in the arts as well. In 1929, in “Designing Games” Lethaby wrote: “Art is not a remote thing requiring special inspiration...we all have the necessary faculties it we would only, Lethaby wrote, get into the way of exercising them.” (p. 2, published by Dryad Handicrafts, Leicester—leaflet #40.)

⁷¹Lethaby’s letter to The Builder, entitled “A Correction With Some Remarks,” printed in the Correspondence section, 19 Aug., 1927, p. 271.

and pudding. I do not ask for bare and bold buildings—an architecture of the simple life and all that; not at all. I want to open a way to intelligence, expression, life and even exuberance.⁷²

A later passage (1930) prescribing how ornament should be emphasized the role of the maker and the need (including sociological needs that Lethaby perceived) for these makers to retain intellectual autonomy:

Any decorative work which is desired must be contributed by independent craftsman who are trying to be allowed to live by the work of their hands... It is simply our duty to employ these courageous men so far as may be possible. Think of the millions which have been spent in mind-destroying, heart-breaking ornaments of the cusp and egg and tongue type, and do try to save fifty shillings for something human.⁷³

Social Considerations and Morals

In the 1920s, in particular, Lethaby voiced his conviction that architects must become aware of the influence they have in determining the nature of the public's demand for architecture. In 1923 he wrote: "If our architects could and would decide what sort of work they willed to do there is no doubt that this would influence public demand. Architects have not sufficiently realized that they are not mere purveyors of fashions, but that they form the nation's advisory body in the great necessary activity of building."⁷⁴ In 1923 also, Lethaby urged that architects' associations work more closely with those of other groups involving building construction: "My belief is, and I am really anxious about it, that we should speedily enter into close association with the engineers' and builders' associations, in an all-around and

⁷²"Part IV: Modern materials and Methods," *The Builder*, 25 Oct., 1918, p. 261. The moralizing tone in this passage can be found in much of Lethaby's writing. What is a little more unusual (but typical of his age) is the characterizing of qualities in terms of the masculine and feminine (see the sentence on "manly art" in the above quote, casting, as did Lewis Mumford for example (or did at least in Lethaby's time) the masculine as the desirable set of characteristics.

⁷³"Art and the Community," Part III: "Aims and Ambitions," *The Builder*, 7 March, 1930, p. 488. Robert Macleod (*Styles and Society*, 1971, p. 60) represents Lethaby (correctly it would seem) as advocating that architects should (although still "designing") leave out "ornament" and allow the craftsman to "put it in on his own."

⁷⁴"The Building Art-Theories and Discussions," Part I: "Architect's Ambitions," *The Builder*, (5 Jan., 1923), p. 8.

sportsmanlike attempt to improve our common concern—the building art.”⁷⁵ Similarly, in 1925, perhaps to emphasize more individualized interaction, Lethaby quoted, apparently in agreement, from an interview with Richard Norman Shaw from 1902, in which Shaw said: “It would be an excellent thing if young architects would go into a kind of partnership with builders...”⁷⁶ Again the subject of architectural societies, Lethaby wrote in 1923 that they should become more like guilds (as well as working in closer association with them). Also, they should be more socially responsible and should cease to be involved in judging architectural competitions. They should concentrate on research and experimentation and on developing their capacity as repositories of architectural records:

Architectural societies should develop in the direction of the guilds; and have the common average good in view rather than the flotation of eminence. They should make themselves centres of research, experiment and record, and work towards the bettering of the great widespread mass of common building. Above all, they should cease to recognise and adjudicate on competitions for buildings. Their very first purpose of a guild is to protect the members from bidding against one another; that it should be accepted as a regular [i.e. regulative] institution together with [at the same time accepting] fees for adjudication seems to me intolerable.⁷⁷

Lethaby often voiced his belief that architects, in their actual day-to-day activities, should be much closer to the actual act of making and doing. For example, in 1921 he wrote, as on numerous other occasions, of the importance of greater understanding, if not really a call for direct involvement by the architect in actual production, calling for: “understanding that architecture is labour rather than paper.”⁷⁸ Much earlier (“Of the Motive in Architectural Design,” 1889), Lethaby had called for “more perfect mastery of what has been done in making the compromise between thought and realizations” although, in this earlier work, there is also the less characteristic idea (for Lethaby) that the architect (necessarily)

⁷⁵Ibid, Part III—“Foundation of Design,” The Builder, 9 March, 1923, p. 406.

⁷⁶From 1925 series on Philip Webb appearing in The Builder, as repub. in book form in 1935 (Philip Webb), p. 83.

⁷⁷“The Building Art,” The Builder, Part XII: “Words or Realities and Positive Architecture,” 7 Dec., 1923, p. 891.

⁷⁸“Modernism and Design,” Part III: “The Workmanship Basis,” The Builder, 4 March, 1921, p. 285.

conceives his main architectural thoughts on design a priori, apparently without response to need and context.⁷⁹

Lethaby as a practicing professional tried to follow a practice of direct involvement himself, as did other Arts and Crafts-related architects. Godfrey Rubens, in his chapter “William Lethaby’s Buildings” in Service’s Edwardian Architecture and its Origins (1975) illustrated Lethaby’s Melsetter House in the Orkneys and wrote, as part of the caption for the photograph of this work: “Now Lethaby was working directly as a practical builder with local craftsmen, putting into practice his revolutionary view [Rubens apparently would like to give Lethaby sole credit] of the architect as constructor.”⁸⁰ Rubens, a little later in the work cited, in discussing Lethaby’s church at Brockhampton, observed similarly, that Lethaby, “because of his increasing distrust for ‘paper architecture’ used direct labour...” and thus, Rubens continued, “the architect [meaning either Lethaby or Randall Wells, the architect Lethaby employed as his clerk of the works] was involved in the actual building process...”⁸¹ In the same book, in the chapter “Sir Aston Webb and the Office” (by H. Bulkeley Creswell) we have, for contrast, this observation on Lethaby’s contemporary, Aston Webb: “He rarely went on to his jobs and none of his staff every did. His clerk of works—often from afar—came to him, reported and received his orders.”⁸²

More important even, perhaps, than the architect’s direct participation in (or at least close acquaintanceship with) production was the nature of the executant artist’s and artisan’s involvement (whether or not that was the architect himself) in the making of art and architectural objects. On art in general, Lethaby wrote: “Art should be looked upon not as luxury and enjoyment to the buyer but as life

⁷⁹Op.cit., A.A. Notes, Vol. IV, No. 32, Nov. 1889, p. 24. In this same early article he maintained that there is in artifice an ingredient of “instinct” (another name for “art” or “style,” in this context) which no formula can make clear. It was, he suggested in a rather sweeping statement earlier, that this instinct, when expressed, is what distinguishes “architecture” from “building” (“...there is a common instinct...call it ‘art or style’—it is this alone which expressed in building is architecture”), p. 24.

⁸⁰Op.cit., Alastair Service, ed., (1975), p. 137.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 138.

⁸²Ibid., p. 332.

and breath to the maker, and extend the idea to cover everything of quality and goodness in things made by hands, and further to beautiful care of the tilled earth.”⁸³

In 1913, Lethaby was prepared (tentatively, at least) to rule the use of concrete a perpetually inferior construction alternative because of the character of the labor required:

...concrete construction seems to call—I may be mistaken—for a large supply of commonest labour, a society of navvies organized by gangers. So far as this is necessarily the case concrete structure can never, I think however high their functions may be or however perfect their forms—become a noble type of architecture. For I must repeat again, a fine architecture is not a question of shapes, but of the quality of the effort that has gone into [it]...⁸⁴

And, consistently, a number of years later (1931), Lethaby prescribed: “We have so far as possible to substitute personal human work for manufactured richness. The smile of beauty springs from human expression rather than by looking expressive. As much work as possible must be taken out of the slavery department and an equivalent done at a higher level of production.”⁸⁵

Davey, in quoting from Lethaby’s first book (Architecture, Mysticism or Myth, 1891) linked Lethaby’s words about the art of the future (“The Message will still be of nature and man, of order and beauty, but all will be sweetness, simplicity and freedom, confidence and light...the new, the future is to aid life and to train it...”)⁸⁶ to Morris’ theories as articulated in News from Nowhere.⁸⁶ That much could be granted by Lethaby, in a general way, but Davey also observed that Lethaby’s views are virtually identical to those from News... (first published in installments in The Commonweal the year before.⁸⁷ That kind of exact correspondence is not really verifiable as Lethaby, unlike Morris, never seemed to

⁸³Scrips and Scraps (1956), op.cit., p. 38.

⁸⁴“Some Things to Be Done,” The Builder, 14 Feb., 1913, p. 207.

⁸⁵“Modern Church Building,” The Builder, 6 Feb., 1931, p. 284.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 59.

⁸⁷Ibid., Davey is certainly correct in saying (here) that by the early 1890s, Lethaby is very much under the influence of Morris and Webb.

have extended his list of requisite elements for utopia beyond those associated with the arts, architecture, urban problems and the environment.⁸⁸

Twenty years after Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, Lethaby offered some recommendations, in Architecture (1911), for improvements in architecture and related activities. The first four emphasize concerns which could be thought of as more general social nature. These tie the hoped-for improvements to the actions of the general populace:

Architecture must be founded on love for the city.

Architecture must be founded on worship of home and nation.

Architecture itself (and town planning) is not enough without civic enthusiasm for “corporate life [medieval-style life] with common ceremonial.”

City government must spend less on art and more on “fine quality in ordering forms of workmanship”—i.e. cleaner streets, tidier railroad stations.⁸⁹

⁸⁸Kenneth Frampton, in Modern Architecture (1980) p. 46, summed up the main points of Morris’ utopian vision of “Nowhere” as describing a land where the following conditions prevailed:

1. The state had withered away according to Marxist prophecy.
2. There would be no distinction between town and country.
3. The city would no longer exist as a dense physical entity.
4. The “great engineering achievements” of the nineteenth century would have been dismantled—wind and water would become once more the sole sources of power.
5. Roads and waterways would become again the principal means of transport.
6. Society would exist without money or property, without crime or punishment, without prison or parliaments.
7. There would be social order based on free association of family groups within the structure of the commune.
8. Work would be based on guilds or Werkbund; labor would be unforced.
9. Education would be free and unforced.

Alfred Powell, in his collection of Lethaby’s sayings, Scraps and Scraps (1956) included one to the effect that for society to improve, in Lethaby’s opinion, the “work-ethic” must be re-established (p. 29). The orig. source in Lethaby’s writing and date not given. This pronouncement would also be consistent with Morris.

⁸⁹Op.cit., 1955 ed., p. 190-192. The other two requisites concern 1) architectural education (pointing out that a more systematic education is required and that the present system was wasteful and misdirected) and 2) the need to produce “a new science of building monopoly” incorporating knowledge of past types (but not being concerned with their “styles”).

A comment from 1917 by Lethaby is concerned with a more general (and elusive) goals, with people identifying and following the spirit of their own culture. Proper architectural form expressing this could then follow: “If we would build up a noble civilization, we have to find and follow after a spirit, a spirit which shall truly express us, as Roman architecture express the Romans. When we have the concentrated mind it will find the proper form for all things.”⁹⁰ A few years later, Lethaby linked future architectural configurations to other general societal concerns—morals and hygiene:

What, then are the conditions that are to produce the forms of the future? We are on the right lines when we develop the moral and hygienic tendencies of our civilization. Let us study cleanliness; let us study hygiene, which is its other name. The greater the demand for cleanliness on the part of the community the greater are the demands upon architects, and the more thorough must we study those demands. Similarly, the comforts, the amenities, the recreational demands of modern life are continually imposing on us our conditions, together with new stimulations to thought.⁹¹

In 1923 in the series “The Building Art,” Lethaby remarked on the ambitions of architects or rather, what he thought should be the ambitions of architects. Ideas for guiding these ambitions were furnished under six headings:

1. Loyalty to the noble art [of architecture] itself.
2. Service to the community.
3. The idea of national culture.
4. International emulation.
5. The universal right.
6. An opportunity for [the architect to enjoy] a reasonable form of personal development.⁹²

⁹⁰“The Spirit of Rome,” *Architectural Review*, Vol. XLI, January, 1917, p. 4. In *Scripts and Scraps* (1956), *op. cit.*, one finds a similar comment: “We must ‘grasp a central idea of Life in England and work consumedly for that.’” (p. 9, orig. source in Lethaby’s writing and date not given). Another reference by Lethaby to arriving at a holistic, guiding principle is also contained in *Scripts...* (p. 9) “...we want a new hope, or a putting of the old hope in such a way that people believe it, it being a whole, satisfying theory of life and direction as to conduct in reference to some central idea.” (orig. source in Lethaby’s writing and date not given).

⁹¹“Modernism and Design”—Part XII: “Architectural Theory and Building Practice,” *The Builder*, 2 Dec., 1921, p. 749. Another issue related to moral concerns, or at least the imparting of “virtues” to architecture was brought up the previous year in Lethaby’s article “Housing and Furnishing” (1920). This concerned “frankness,” which Lethaby held as a “great thing” and “disguises and subterfuge are always repulsive in building.” (Repr. in *Form in...*, 1922, p. 40.)

⁹²“The Building Art: Theories and Discussions”—Part I: “Architects’ Ambitions,” *The Builder*, 5 Jan., 1923, p. 8. Points 4 and 5 seem the most nebulous.

Related to the last point were some thoughts (in the same article) on “success” as pertaining to architects

Lethaby wrote:

It must be admitted that ambition comes to most of us immediately as a personal question, and that personal “success” is not necessarily always in the line of community service. Still, I think that I may “assume” that we would like our personal “success” so far as possible to be legitimate and sportsmanlike, not founded on an accident, abuse or absurdity. We would like not only to be much admired but to be a little worthy of admiration as well. If we can just escape starvation and going to prison for it, we would like our life-work to be as sound and sensible as may be in a difficult world.⁹³

Later in the year, in the same series, Lethaby’s advice to architects was centered around questions of “loyalty”:

Perhaps someone may be inclined to ask, “What does it matter? Why should we worry: and isn’t one way of building as good as another if it pleases those who have money to spend?” One great reason is that of loyalty to those we are supposed to lead and represent, but of whom nothing is even said in architectural discussions. The next is that of loyalty to ourselves, for “architecture” as it is practiced makes the kind of men who are architects. The next is loyalty to employers, our people, and country. Another is loyalty to our ancient art [architecture] itself. Architecture was made for man, not man for the architecture of architects.⁹⁴

In the undated typescript “Renaissance and Modernism,” “reality” and “truth” are advocated as the foundations for future architecture:

Turning towards the future the most entrancing Utopia that one might long for would be that we should set to work to build like ordinary pleasant, kindly, human creatures, but the way is darkened by superstitions and a bad inherited tradition. Some day, however, if the world goes on, architecture will again lay its foundations in reality and rear its wall with truth.⁹⁵

Lethaby’s rebuttal to Scott’s The Architecture of Humanism in his 1923 series “The Building Art” contained a defense against the “Ethical Fallacy,” that is, the judgment of architecture on the basis of presuming to see certain qualities judged to be morally good (or approved) in some works and not in

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Op.cit., Part VIII: “Clerks and Artists,” The Builder, 6 July, 1923, p. 17.

⁹⁵Op.cit., no date, Lethaby’s papers at Barnstaple, pp. 4-5.

others. Ruskin, Morris, and their ideological issue (Lethaby, for example) were accused of this. Lethaby's defense against this charge was advanced in two parts. First, he suggested that seeing these "moral" ingredients in architecture was just common sense and was an entirely reasonable undertaking, which, of course, it was for Lethaby. Second, Lethaby quoted at length from Scott's book, from his defense of the Italian Baroque against "ethical criticism." The following excerpt includes Scott's statement of the charges against the style mentioned. The first part of Lethaby's defense, then, went as follows:

Now we come to the Ethical Fallacy and I will quote at greater length from this division, as it is the centre of the book [i.e. Scott's]; indeed, the other fallacies are hardly more than parts of this master fallacy. In examining this section, I must confess to a certain shyness, as if I had to confess myself Mrs. Grundy's uncle. Probably the most old-fogey thing one can do at this moment is to say that art ("Art") can have anything to do with ethics, or that still more stuffy word, morals. To see if the words need be so terrifying I look again at Skeat, who says: "Ethic, relating to custom, commonly used as ethics. 'I will never set politics against ethics.' (Bacon). Moral, virtuous, excellent in conduct, relating to conduct." Now before we come to Mr. Geoffrey Scott's demonstration, it is hard to see how excellence in conduct becomes a fallacy when it is applied to the conduct of building operations. But let us see.⁹⁶

The second part of the defense, consisting of the mentioned quote from Scott followed. This was intended to destroy Scott's argument on the assumption, one supposes, that its own weaknesses, viewed under close scrutiny and with the aid of the preamble by Lethaby just offered in the excerpt would ensure its collapse. Indeed, among readers who were true (unquestioning?) loyalists to Lethaby's point of view this may have been true. The effect on those less committed, however, is more in doubt. From Scott, as quoted by Lethaby:

The last phase of ethical criticism [Lethaby's Phase, could one say?] has at least this merit, that it strikes at architecture not its setting. It takes the kernel from its shell before pronouncing upon taste. There are those who claim direct perception in architectural forms of moral flavours. They say, for example of the baroque (for although such hostile judgements are passed upon the whole Renaissance, it is the Seventeenth Century style which most often and most acutely provokes them) that it is slovenly, ostentatious, and false. And nothing, consequently, but a moral insensibility, can enable us to accept it being thus, in place of an architecture which should be—as architecture can be—patiently finished and true. Baroque

⁹⁶"The Building Art: Theories and Discussions," Part VI: "The Architecture of Riot," The Builder, 1 June, 1923, p. 892.

conceptions bear with them their own proof [according to ethical criticism] that they spring from a diseased character...

The contention is supported by admitted facts. The detail of the baroque style is rough. It is not finished with the loving care of the quattrocento or even of the somewhat clumsy Gothic. It often makes no effort to represent anything in particular or even to commit itself to any definite form. It makes shift with tumbled draperies which have no serious relation to the human structure; it delights in vague volutes that have no serious relation to the architectural structure. It is rapid and inexact. It reveals, therefore, a slovenly character and can only please a slovenly attention. The facts are true, but the deduction is false. If the baroque builders had wished to save themselves trouble it would have been easy to refrain from decoration altogether, and acquire, maybe, moral approbation for severity.

But they had a definite purpose in view and the purpose was exact though it required "inexact" architecture. They wished to communicate, through architecture, a sense of exultant vigour and overflowing strength. So far, presumably, their purpose was not ignoble. An unequaled knowledge of the aesthetics of architecture determined the means which they adopted. ...Lust for the quality of exultation; for vigour, so to speak, at play. To communicate this the baroque architects conceived of movement, tossing and returning; movement unrestrained; yet not destructive of that essential repose which comes from composition; nor exhaustive of that reserve of energy implied in masses, when, as here, they were truly and significantly massed.

Hence, sometimes of necessity—a necessity of aesthetics if not of constructive logic—for that worst insolence and outrage upon academic taste, the triple pediment with its thrice-repeated lines, placed like the chords in the last bars of a symphony, to close the tumult and to restore the eye its calm. In this sense alone is baroque architecture in the hands of its greatest masters—slovenly or ostentatious, and for these reasons. But we do not complain of a cataract that is slovenly, nor find ostentation in the shout of an army. The moral judgement of the critic was here unsound because the purpose of the architect was misconceived; and that was attributed to coarseness or character which was, in fact, a fine penetration of mind. The methods of baroque, granted its end, are justified. Other architectures by other means have conveyed strength in repose. These styles may be yet grander, and of an interest more satisfying and profound. But the laughter of strength is expressed in one style only; the Italian baroque architecture of the seventeenth century.⁹⁷

In defending himself Lethaby advocated not a subscription to Humanism as a guide for the future—but that which is "human." To accept the "humanistic" approach as defined by Scott, Lethaby wrote, would be essentially to ignore the serious nature and practical obligations of architecture. In reference to all found "Fallacies" that Scott saw in the thinking of his philosophical antagonists, Lethaby observed:

⁹⁷Ibid.

The thought which results in my mind from this marshalling of word arguments is of the fallacy of “Fallacies,” and a decision to cling to the plain Human in place of the euphemistic Humanistic after all.

Mr. Geoffrey Scott’s argument has certain collateral implications. If to approve and enjoy this architecture called “humanistic” we have to eject from our estimate of the works of man all the considerations labeled fallacies, then the things itself must be just the kind I had supposed from the look of it. Writers on the grandeurs of “Architecture” seem to talk as if the architect was a free artist singing his wonderful designs into the air for connoisseurs to applaud the compositions of mighty mass, deep shade, and dancing lines...I could, perhaps stand a carnival element in a temporary pageant, but an enduring building should be of sterner stuff than this kind of humanism.⁹⁸

On the basis of the material furnished in the debate alone it would be difficult to decide a winner in the Lethaby-Scott conflict. After all was said and done, however, deciding who was right (or more importantly, which “light” to follow) must have depended after all on one’s predilections. In the second two decades of the twentieth century, more, apparently followed Scott. Posener, writing in the 1960s, presented Scott’s criticism as being a necessary final round in the development of Lethaby’s contribution:

Scott’s effect remained preponderantly negative. The English [Arts and Crafts] movement had [already] lost its impulse ten years before [i.e. by about 1904]... Now, its founding principles were, one after the other explored and analyzed by Scott and reduced to absurdity. But even looked at in this way, Scott’s criticism are a necessary completion to Lethaby’s theory.⁹⁹

In the next decade, Robert Macleod, in Style and Society (1971), underlined the direct opposition of Lethaby’s and Scott’s approach. Scott’s point of view (essentially that of looking at architecture only as “art”) is derived from Wölfflin, Macleod thought. Scott’s writings, especially The Architecture of Humanism confirmed, Macleod observed, a drift toward “classicism” [Baroque?] and the supremacy of “taste.” A polarity was thus set up in Macleod’s view, with Scott representing “taste” and “style” and

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 892.

⁹⁹Anfänge des Funktionalismus, Julius Posener, 1964, p. 105.

Lethaby standing for “service,” and “science” as the true basis for architecture in his age. Macleod believed Scott “won” in architecture but Lethaby’s ideas continued to be important in planning.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has offered some of Lethaby’s thoughts on what should be done and what conditions are necessary for the kind of architecture he wished for his own time and the future. Part of the advice proffered to this end was couched by Lethaby in the language of saying what it meant (or what it would take) to be “modern.” The first of two major sections of this chapter discussed this, dealing with such topics as the necessity of being unaffected, unconscious—of learning from the past but eschewing the “Styles.”

The second of the two major sections of this chapter discussed advice by Lethaby more “directly” given and included, his warning to beware of “theory” and his call for a rational, scientific architecture based on “experiment,” “fitness,” “clarity,” “economy,” “standardization,” and other considerations. Observance of custom (or tradition) was held to be important, but also there was a need, Lethaby thought, for originality, rightly conceived. A concern that architecture should serve society is most evident, and the discussions involving differences of opinion between Lethaby and Scott illustrated the efforts Lethaby made to prevent (unsuccessfully) present-day architecture from following the paths indicated by this ideological adversary.

A discussion of one specific area for achieving an improved architectural condition in the present and future has been omitted from this chapter. This is the one having to do with architectural education. Because of the amount of material that might be usefully introduced in looking at this education issue, the discussion of this topic has been deferred and becomes the topic of chapter XV.

¹⁰⁰Op.cit., p. 133. Raymond Unwin is cited in reference to this continued influence of Lethaby on planning issues.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This section offers concluding remarks in four parts: 1) observations about the general character of Lethaby's theory of architecture; 2) and 3) observations on the significance of Lethaby's thought and his contribution to architecture; and 4) some closing remarks.

Observations about the General Character of Lethaby's Theory – Scope of Interests

The scope of Lethaby's interests was remarkable. Basil Ward compared Lethaby with eighteenth century "universal" men like Christopher Wren; indeed, a range of interests is already indicated in Lethaby's early writings.¹ From the 1890s, for example, there is his article on the Westminster School of painters (1897), and the one he contributed to the important architectural debate of the time as to whether architecture was a profession or an art (1892, in the book of similar title edited by Shaw) as well as his architectural monograph on the Hagia Sophia (1894). The same decade, he wrote a review of a book dealing with French preservation activity (1898), a monograph on building materials (Leadwork, 1897), and a study of architecture's origins, Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth (1891), which paid unusual attention to the occult as it might apply to architecture and to non-Western building.

The Nature of Lethaby's Theory – Conservative, Reformist, Radical, or . . . ?

Lethaby, while a comprehensive thinker, was not a systematic one, as Reyner Banham has observed. Banham has called Lethaby a "man of feeling" whose position on issues was never as sharply defined as, say, his ideological rival Scott.² With his colleagues in the Arts and Crafts Movement, Lethaby shared a horror of systematic aesthetics. (Fellow critic and activist in the Art Workers Guild,

¹ "William Richard Lethaby, 1857-1931 – A Symposium in Honor of His Centenary" – part IV. "The Whole Man," R.I.B.A. Journal, April 1957, p. 221.

² Banham, op. cit. p. 46.

Roger Fry, although he did not share the commitment Lethaby inherited from Ruskin for stressing the relationship between morality and art, could be cited as a collateral example of this aversion.) Lethaby was, in a sense, a theorist without a dogma, and consequently his thought can be seen as conservative, reformist, or radical.

The concern with moral issues was a feature of nineteenth century architecture and therefore the component of Lethaby's theory having to do with morals may be considered conservative or traditional. The anti-machine views that he held in the earlier states of his career, views in line with orthodox Arts and Crafts theory, might even be categorized as reactionary. When he changed his views to include a more positive attitude towards the machine, his new position on this issue was only radical in the context of the usual thinking of Arts and Crafts adherents, for a more positive point of view about the use of machines and technology in architecture had prevailed long before the inception of the English Arts and Crafts Movement.

Parts of Lethaby's philosophy that concerned the rejection of historical styles and attendant ornament, the willingness to do without much ornament at all and the adherence to particular definitions of workmanship, meaning and design methods in architectural work are radical in that they represent a sharp break from the generally prevailing views and priorities of the times. If these views are seen as promoting "reform," the question emerges as to whether reform requires decidedly new viewpoints or whether it could involve a return to earlier practices not currently in use. At least, Lethaby felt that his positions on such issues as workmanship, meaning and proper design method were similar to those that had existed in medieval times. If he were right, would this be considered reactionary or reformist?³

However, in the second decade of this century, it was possible for those who were to associate the resurgent enthusiasm for stylistic revival (especially the classicizing trends) with being "up-to-date," to

³ Lethaby as a reformist of the Arts and Crafts type helped bring about reform not only through his writing, but through his founding role and leadership in organizations like the Art Workers Guild, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, the London Central School of Arts and Crafts and the Royal College of Art. His reformist efforts made themselves felt also through his leadership and participation in other organizations—the SPAB and the R.I.B.A., for example.

see the aforementioned point of view as old-fashioned. Despite the existence of such charges, Lethaby's convictions about the necessity of rejecting past styles and attendant detail, his readiness to do without ornament altogether, and his embrace of science, engineering, new materials and machinery in building place him in the mainstream of the development of modern architecture. Lethaby's activism in the cause of functionalism is shown in his writings, and in his participation in the founding of and involvement with the Design and Industries Association, which directly reflected the important efforts associated with the modern movement taking place in Germany at the time.⁴

Lethaby's views on education, architectural preservation, and towns and the environment could be considered reformist in some cases and revolutionary in others. His ideas on architectural education parallel those he held regarding architectural practice and could similarly be termed reformist, radical, etc. His views on preservation, based on principles developed by Ruskin and SPAB members like Morris and Webb, can be thought of principally as reformist but the expanded frame of reference Lethaby gave to preservation activities had radical overtones, as did his views about towns and the environment. Other English architects, Ashbee for example, were also interested in such matters, but Lethaby's attention to the last two subjects mentioned was unusual both because of its emergence in the context of late nineteenth century English architectural writing and because it was so comprehensive. Lethaby's commitment to an integration of urban concerns with those of architectural and smaller scale was an additional radical component of his thinking and, in fact, the various other processes of integration present in Lethaby's theory represent a point of view which, for an architectural thinker of Lethaby's time, is radical in character.

How have others perceived Lethaby's theory in the context of the preceding discussion? Basil Ward, in 1957, saw Lethaby as looking "backward for vision and guidance and for standards to follow,"

⁴ A functionalist outlook, closely associated with the concerns mentioned, seems always to have been an important part in Lethaby's thought, but in later years, with his fuller acceptance of the new technology, this became a preoccupation (with resultant proselytizing). This development further establishes his place in the mainstream of the process leading to the Modern Movement.

though taking “a firm stand in the present” and making “bold and accurate forecasts of the future.”⁵ Ward also pointed out that in the 1880s, when Lethaby was first involved in the Arts and Crafts Movement, the positions he adopted were considered “revolutionary.”⁶ Robert Macleod saw Lethaby as a middle-of-the-roader, with the Gothic Revivalist Sedding at one pole, and Blomfield, whose enthusiasm later turned to classicism, at the other. Macleod suggested that Lethaby occupied a unique central position, “a solitary path in the middle.”⁷ But for Macleod, Lethaby was not a “revolutionary” on the grounds that, unlike some who came later, he did not try to substitute a new “form” image for the old ones.⁸ Charlotte Brown characterized Lethaby as one who wished to reform architecture (and society as well) and Posener preferred to describe Lethaby as progressive, rather than as a reformist.⁹

Lethaby as a Transitional Figure

A related issue to the foregoing discussion concerns the notion that Lethaby’s role in architectural change was one involving transition. “Lethaby,” Sir Albert Richardson observed in 1957, “was destined to play a prominent position in the transition from Victorian to Twentieth Century theories of art,” and Posener seven years later remarked that Lethaby’s was a period of necessary transition: “Lethaby himself lived in a harder time. He had seen the ending of the movement [the Arts and Crafts Movement] at the World War (World War I). The demand for reform was becoming comprehensive ... [but] the prospect of its realization, especially after 1918, drew even further into the distance.”¹⁰ Whenever change occurs, people who participate might reasonably be called “transitional” but since change is, candidly viewed,

⁵ “William Richard Lethaby – 1857-1931,” part III, “The Whole Man,” *R.I.B.A. Journal*, April, 1957, p. 222.

⁶ “Lethaby – Architect, Designer, and Teacher,” *Design*, 1957, p. 44.

⁷ Macleod, p. 108.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁹ Charlotte Brown, “W. R. Lethaby: Architecture as Process. Implications for a Methodology of History and Criticism,” doctoral dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1974 (information taken from abstract) and Julius Posener, *Anfänge...* (*op. cit.*) 1964, p. 67.

¹⁰ Sir Albert Richardson, Foreword to the pamphlet “William Richard Lethaby,” (1957) written by A.R.N. Roberts, and published by the London Central School of Arts and Crafts. Posener, *Anfänge...*, 1964, p. 28.

ongoing, the term is reserved in common usage for situations where change has been significant. The events in architecture Lethaby witnessed and participated in would appear to qualify in this last respect and so, to designate him as transitional has some merit.

Lethaby as a Prophet

Others have seen Lethaby as a prophet. In the 1950s, Ward remarked on the prophetic quality of Lethaby's writing and Macleod, in 1971 described Lethaby as genuinely prophetic.¹¹ A few years later Stephen Bayley wrote that Lethaby "was something of a prophet," at least in some respects: "Eleven years before Le Corbusier, he saw the similarities between modern buildings and machines, and suggested the potential importance of new materials..."¹²

In 1919, Lethaby, writing about Ruskin, commented on the nature of prophethood:

A prophet, however much he may appear to be in opposition to his age, yet in a peculiar way represents that particular time. He is the antidote, the balance, the complement, and his is the voice which awakes all those who are ready to be like-minded. If he is wholly successful, and his teaching is absorbed, it may afterwards hardly be understood how anyone might ever have believed otherwise. The flashing inspiration becomes commonplace. It is the prophet's aim to be thus abolished in absorption; to be lost by diffusion.¹³

To some extent, the foregoing could be applied to Lethaby, especially concerning his assumptions about modern architecture in regard to the growing importance of science and new technology and the diminished use of ornament (if used at all).

Contradictions and Consistency in Lethaby's Theory

In this study it has been pointed out that there are contradictions in some of Lethaby's statements and others have made observations about more general contradictions and lack of consistency in

¹¹ See, for example, in regard to Ward's commentary, the first lecture of his 1957 series on Lethaby at the Royal College of Art. For Macleod's comment see *Style and Society*, p. 67.

¹² "W. R. Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition," *R.I.B.A. Journal*, April, 1975, p. 29.

¹³ "Ruskin: Defeat and Victory," originally given as an address to the Arts and Crafts Society (April, 1919) and reprinted in *Form in Civilization* (1922), pp. 183-184.

Lethaby's theory. Most of the allegations, relating to both specific points in Lethaby's theory and to his theory generally, turn out not to be substantive upon closer examination. One "contradiction" of the type involving specific statements is illustrated by two comments by Lethaby. Compare:

If architecture was born of need it soon showed some magic quality, and all true building touches depths of feelings and opens the gates of wonder.¹⁴

with...

The architecture of magic is gone, the architecture of mind and heart remain for use to explore.¹⁵

The first seems to say that there will always be some magic quality in all "true building," the second that magic in architecture (real "building") is no longer possible. But if the second statement is taken in the context of some additional statements by him, it turns out that for Lethaby a certain kind of magic is still possible in modern architecture and is desirable. Like the old kind, it would be a magic of awe and wonder, not explainable at least on first exposure; but this magic would be based not only on the spirit ("heart") which Lethaby said continued as in old times to be a factor, but also on the intellect ("mind") – relying on science and technology.¹⁶

Ward, Posener, Thomas, Davey and Banham have also raised questions, centering on issues of varying specificity, about contradictions and consistency in Lethaby's theory. Of a rather specific nature is Banham's comment of 1960 wherein he likened Lethaby's point of view (and Muthesius' also) to Voysey's on the subject of the picturesque in architecture in a way which was not intended as a compliment to any of them:

¹⁴ Architecture, 1911, (1955), p. 6.

¹⁵ "Renaissance and Modern," TS, Barnstaple Library archives, p. 7, n.d.

¹⁶ A similar kind of seeming contradiction in Lethaby's theory involves statements which appear to be in opposition, one of the two being, necessarily, false. Both are true at times, however.

...other members and supporters of the English Free architecture were capable of being quite as muddle-headed as he [Voysey]. Lethaby, for instance, went on record with his contempt for 'mouldy Picturesque' and Muthesius was equally scathing about it, in spite of the fact that the Free architecture they so much admired [and advocated] was more the product of the Picturesque than anything else, and in many ways no more advanced than early Picturesque architecture had been.¹⁷

Certainly there is some debt to the Picturesque attitude in most Arts and Crafts work – in the residential work which forms the main corpus of this idiom, at least. In Lethaby's defense it might be said that he possibly had in mind, in thinking of the picturesque, all the irrelevant "styles" whose formal features were employed to make the architectural composition more appealingly pictorial. A more general question was raised by Basil Ward in 1957. He implied then that there was something contradictory in Lethaby's thought, although he was really perhaps criticizing Lethaby for not being consistent. Ward first pointed to Lethaby's credentials as an "acolyte" of the Arts and Crafts Movement, then continued: "...can this man of the Arts and Crafts be he who was so active in helping to produce in 1915, the Design and Industries Association...?"¹⁸ The answer is yes, but of course there is a change in Lethaby's attitude with time.

Another problem has been highlighted by Julius Posener – one involving Lethaby's support for handicrafts versus machine work: "Lethaby comes to the industrial art movement and develops ... a functionalism which accepts the technics of science as the foundation of a coming architecture but ... also defends ... manual work against the machine. This contradiction he did not overcome."¹⁹ But (as one response to this) it is possible to argue that Lethaby, in his later years, reached an accommodation of such a nature that both machine-work and craftwork were considered necessary and valid and should be allowed to co-exist. The aforementioned problem is less easy to dispel, however, when put in the form that an English commentator on Lethaby, Brian Thomas, did a few years earlier (1957): "First it seems to

¹⁷ Banham, *op. cit.*, fn. 1, p. 47. Banham's references to a lack of advancement must have been in regard to functionalist concerns, for he mentioned also in the footnote that a recent, that is, modern tenant of Nash's "Cronkhill" (1804), a prime example of the Picturesque attitude in architecture, had determined the building to be "very convenient."

¹⁸ "Lethaby – architect, designer, and teacher," *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹⁹ Julius Posener, *op. cit.*, p. 28, (1964).

me that Lethaby really never resolved a dichotomy which remains an issue to this day, one side of him thirsting for pure functionalism in architecture, the other side longing to make more use of decorative craftsmanship, which, strictly speaking, is a non-functional embellishment.”²⁰ It is true that, in later years, both avenues of Lethaby’s thought suggested by Thomas existed side by side and that Lethaby never really abdicated his pro-craftsman stance after he had taken up positions which seem to have been in opposition to that.²¹ It is evident, as indicated in excerpts cited in several previous chapters of this study, that Lethaby, as far as could be done, sought to reconcile any new ideas he found attractive with his old ones (derived from Morris and Ruskin) rather than replace the old completely with the new.

Related to the preceding questions posed by War, Thomas and Posener is a comment made by Davey which has Lethaby changing sides ideologically rather than, say, sitting on the fence. Davey wrote that as Lethaby “became more and more divorced from the realities of ordinary building, his theories became increasingly opposed to many of the original Art and Craft ideals.”²² This seems, however, to overstate and also misidentify the reason for such deviations as Lethaby did make from the orthodox Arts and Crafts point of view. To say that Lethaby eventually placed himself in opposition to “many” Arts and Crafts ideals is not to say that he was opposed to a majority of them. Davey’s comment, however, without further qualification suggests this latter condition and conveys a stronger sense of rejection on Lethaby’s part than was actually the case. It would seem nearer the mark to say that Lethaby continued even at the end of his life to embrace (although it was by then only a part of an expanded frame of reference) a very much arts and crafts-oriented philosophy.

²⁰ “William Richard Lethaby,” *R.I.B.A. Journal*, March 1957, p. 219.

²¹ While in later life Lethaby departed some from the stance of his mentors on several issues (for example, on the issue of support for the craftsman to the exclusion of any possible rival allegiance), on the basis of all evidence it seems that Peter Davey went too far in labeling him “one of the betrayers of the gospel by Ruskin and Morris,” (Davey, *op. cit.*, p. 66.) Even in Lethaby’s later life, when he did make some departures from orthodox arts and crafts theory, a betrayal of Ruskin and Morris would always be beyond Lethaby’s intentions. Davey’s charge that Lethaby’s betrayal may have occurred insidiously, as a function of what Davey sees in Lethaby as a chronic inclination to temporize, is also not substantiated.

²² Davey, *Ibid.* Davey’s implication that there may be a causal relationship, between Lethaby’s divorce from building reality (by virtue of his retirement from regular architectural practice) and his alleged opposition to Arts and Crafts ideals is also not substantiated. The timing of these circumstances could be coincidental.

Other Questions Raised about Lethaby's Theory

Other questions about Lethaby's views, other than those just discussed about contradiction and consistency, have also been raised. The most noticeable personalities to raise these were two English contemporaries of Lethaby – Geoffrey Scott and G. Maxwell Aylwin. Scott's most potent criticisms of Lethaby's viewpoint came in 1914 via his book The Architecture of Humanism. Although Scott in his criticisms of 1914 did not, as Aylwin did in his comments in The Builder in the next decade, have Lethaby solely in mind, it is clear that he was a major target. How Lethaby might fit as a perpetrator of the fallacies of reason Scott identifies in the course of his book has already been discussed in several contexts in earlier chapters of this study, Scott's ideas being more related to Lethaby's in the context of the various subjects considered. Added to such discussions here will be a remark or two by Aylwin who appears to have supplied most of the noticeable dissent from Lethaby's views specifically, to be found in the press during the latter's lifetime. In 1921, Aylwin, writing in The Builder, alleged that Lethaby's pronouncements about contemporary problems were obscure and further suggested that his considerable reputation as an historian should not make his remarks about present-day concerns immune from question:

Professor Lethaby's contributions to architectural history are monumental and deserving of our eternal gratitude. The very profundity of his writing, however, which we ordinary folk can but haltingly decipher when he has definite facts to reveal, must not serve to excuse the obscurity of his meaning when he intends to deliver a direct message the present age.²³

About two years later, Aylwin, also in a letter to The Builder reacting to some views of Lethaby's recently published and taking a similar tact to that of the 1921 remarks, questioned whether it is appropriate that ideas which belonged essentially in the realm of architectural philosophy should attain heightened validity by virtue of the reputation that their propagator had acquired through

²³ "Grain of Mustard Seed" (letter from a correspondent), The Builder, Feb. 11, 1921, p. 185. This letter is presented in The Builder anonymously but Charlotte Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 173, identified the writer as Aylwin.

accomplishments in another discipline – in Lethaby’s case – history. Aylwin maintained that it was important to hold views of such provenance up to scrutiny.

He is historian and philosopher, with not only a double status but a dual responsibility. An historian teaching philosophy sets a microscope upon the history he has revealed. A historian teaching philosophy will attract a number of followers on the credentials of this historical knowledge. It is therefore, of great importance that the philosophy of an historian should be thoroughly examined and freely criticized.²⁴

In the same letter, another question (also similar to that raised in the 1921 letter) was addressed to Lethaby. Aylwin again suggested, in a polite way, that obscurity was a defect of Lethaby’s ideas but the following words could also be interpreted as the expression of another, equally serious charge – lack of substance:

There is a tendency among modern writers to indulge in vague generalities. “Here is the ford,” they cry, on the banks of the raging torrent. “Somewhere about here; plunge in and find it.” And admiringly disciples marvel at such courage, wait to see somebody drown, and when the time comes for themselves to cross, they seek a bridge. Professor Lethaby is not such a writer. He is not afraid to preach with some definition. Yet for myself ... I find many of his points slip through my fingers ... just when I would grasp them. The apparently clean outline seems, on close inspection, to be a series of dots.²⁵

While the syntax used in the analogy in the preceding excerpt is a little unclear, the charge against Lethaby is. In the next paragraph of Aylwin’s letter, wherein, in comparing Lethaby with a magician, another, related complaint is advanced (although there is again, some lack of clarity). This was that Lethaby willfully substituted the simulation of substance for substance itself in the expression of his views, and that he set up “straw men” to make his views seem more compelling:

I am reminded of a clever conjurer, who leads us to such willing by-play before discovering a rabbit in the coat pocket of a stout gentleman in the front row. We go home delighted with the entertainment and admiring the skill of the entertainer, but with no false ideas that we have

²⁴ “Letter to The Builder” appearing Aug. 3, 1923, p. 178, in response to “The Two Architectures and Education for Building – part VIII of Lethaby’s series, “The Building Art: Theories and Discussions” in the same periodical.

²⁵ Ibid.

learned a new way of catching rabbits. I am, in fact, suspicious that the rabbits that the professor catches have been brought in specifically to be caught.²⁶

Sub-summary

In the preceding sections, the comprehensiveness of Lethaby's interests and activities was first emphasized. Following that was a discussion of Lethaby's theory in terms of whether it could be categorized as conservative, reformist, or radical. Lethaby's status as a transitional figure was next brought up and then some ideas on the subject of Lethaby as a prophet. Finally, remarks were offered dealing with questions raised first about the consistency and/or contradictory qualities of Lethaby's ideas, then about such issues as the vulnerability of Lethaby's ideas to challenge and whether they had substance. In the remaining pages, some summary thoughts on Lethaby's contributions to architecture generally and to the area of architectural theory particularly will be offered.

Lethaby's Contribution to Architecture and the Significance of His Thought – Contribution through Practice

Taking the more general aim of this section first one can begin by acknowledging the significant contributions Lethaby made to architectural practice. For a long period he was the chief assistant to one of England's most productive and influential architectural practitioners, Norman Shaw. The success of Shaw's practice during the years of Lethaby's tenure certainly owes much to Lethaby. Lethaby's later, independent commissions, though not many, had a notable impact on a number of other English architects and some foreign ones and, in the execution of his commission for the Church at Brockhampton, he made one of the signal contributions to the story of the use of concrete in architecture. Lethaby's buildings were paradigms of the Arts and Crafts approach to ornament, symbolism, materials and planning, and they exemplified the Arts and Crafts outlook as to the nature of the architect's involvement.

Also part of Lethaby's practical activity was his involvement in preservation work. He acquired positions of marked importance in this field – as Surveyor of Westminster Abbey and later, Rochester

²⁶ Ibid.

Cathedral. In related, voluntary pursuits, Lethaby played an important role in the practical activities of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. In these and other situations Lethaby was able to give reality to his convictions about preservation methodology and provide a visible demonstration to others of the efficacy of his ideas. What stood out the most in his method of dealing with old buildings was the sound scholarship that he brought to bear, his commitment to minimal tampering with the historic fabric and his unalterable opposition to “restoring” as then practiced. The comprehensiveness with which he viewed the subject of preservation is also an important aspect of his thought.

Contributions to Organizations

Lethaby also was an important factor in the creation of the key organizations of the English Arts and Crafts Movement as in the case with the Art Workers Guild. His involvement in the Guild, which included his service as its Master, extended over a long period. He was president of another arts and crafts organization, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society which, like the Art Workers Guild, he helped found.²⁷ Lethaby was a leader in other organizations also. Besides his work with the SPAB, noted earlier, Lethaby also exercised leadership in the RIBA, at least in activities relating to education. He was made a Fellow of the Institute in 1906. He played the key role (as first Principal) in the founding of the London Central School of Arts and Crafts. He was also important in effecting reforms at the Royal College of Art and served a long tenure as the college’s first Professor of Design. Later, Lethaby was a significant force in the founding of the first English, Werkbund-modeled, organization – the Design and Industries Association of which he had his turn as president.

Work as an Historian

Lethaby also achieved prominence of the first order as a historian of architecture and art. His friend and colleague in this sphere of activity, Sidney Cockerell, described him in 1931 as: “an architect and

²⁷ He also co-founded the craftsman-oriented firm, Kenton and Company, and was the dominant personality among the participants as Rubens tells us in his chapter (“William Lethaby’s Buildings”) in Service’s book, *op. cit.*, p. 132

student of antiquity who occupied a place apart by reason of this remarkable insight, his varied learning and his unique personality.”²⁸ In an article in 1944 Mark Fitzroy observed that Lethaby would certainly be remembered as a “brilliant and profound writer on architectural and kindred subjects, an archaeologist of unsurpassed knowledge.”²⁹ The article also serves to substantiate the recognition that Lethaby achieved in his principal area of involvement in historical studies, for Fitzroy referred to him “as the foremost modern authority on medieval art.”³⁰ And, as to Byzantine art, in Lethaby’s monograph on the Church of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (published 1894, with Harold Swainson as co-author), Lethaby went beyond producing a scholarly effort within the then accepted bounds of formalist analysis. In this work, he broke new ground in the genre of architectural monographs by expanding the scope of investigation to include not only formalist analysis but other factors pertinent to the study of the church as well – economic and sociological considerations, for example.

Catalyst to the Byzantine Revival

Though he was absolutely against the construction of contemporary buildings in past “styles,” Lethaby contributed to the revival of the Byzantine idiom in England. This came about mainly because of the effect his book on the Hagia Sophia had on the English architectural world. Lethaby’s impact has been readily acknowledged, for example, in the case of the single most important English building in the Byzantine revival idiom, Westminster Cathedral (1897-98).³¹

²⁸ Blunt, *op. cit.*, p. 59, quoted from Lethaby’s obituary in the Sunday Times (London), July 19, 1931.

²⁹ The Adelphi, (article title n.a.), March, 1944, p. 49.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Re: Westminster Cathedral – see De L’Hôpital, *op. cit.*, p. 4. In De L’Hôpital’s book on the cathedral a quotation was included about the influence of Lethaby’s and Swainson’s monograph upon Bentley’s design for the building. (Lethaby was an admirer of Bentley’s work also.) Beresford Pite, an architect with whom Lethaby was close, built Christ Church, Brixton Road, London, in 1902-03 in the Byzantine Revival Style and Lethaby himself, in the entry for the Liverpool Cathedral competition of 1902 led a group effort that produced a design that was partially Byzantine in inspiration. From a few years later, also possibly affected by Lethaby’s book, was Sir Aston Webb’s and E. Ingress Bell’s Great Hall (1908-09) done in the Byzantine Revival Style at the University of Birmingham.

Contributions as a Teacher

Besides Lethaby's activities in practice and his pursuits as a historian, he was an innovative and influential teacher. Led by Lethaby the London Central School was, in its early years when Lethaby was principal, regarded by some as the most progressive school of art in Europe. The school had an important influence on other art schools in England and its influence on the Continent can be connected to the reorganization of existing schools and the foundation of new schools there – especially such activity resulting from the efforts of Muthesius as has been discussed earlier in this study. Besides heavily influencing the London Central School's curriculum, selection of faculty and teaching methods, Lethaby played an important part in the determination of the school's physical characteristics as it was built on Southampton Row in London. While serving as the school's principal, he prepared the brief (i.e., the detailed requirements or specifications) for the school's new building, which the London County Council Architect's Department was charged with designing. Lethaby's position as first Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art and his leading role in bringing about radical reforms there has already been noted, as has his important effort to reformulate the architectural education program of the RIBA.

Stimulus to Calligraphy

Stemming from both his activities in education and those in practice is Lethaby's contribution to calligraphy and its architectural applications. Lethaby is credited, in connection with his work at the London Central School, with the timely encouragement of the career of Edward Johnston, who became one of the foremost modern calligraphers in the West. Godfrey Rubens has noted that, around the turn of the twentieth century, Lethaby started an important class in lettering at the London Central School and that Johnston, whom Peter Behrens later tried to hire away for his school in Germany, was in charge of

this course.³² Rubens also has observed that Lethaby was one of a handful of men responsible for a modern revival in printing and type design.³³

In regard to the application of calligraphy to architecture Rubens has pointed out that Lethaby was a pioneer (in modern times) in advocating the use of lettering on buildings.³⁴ In the case of Lethaby's own Eagle Insurance Company in Birmingham (1900-01, designed in collaboration with Birmingham architect Joseph Ball), Rubens has written: "It was probably the first modern building to have a well-designed inscription as an integral part of the façade."³⁵

Extender of Ruskin's and Morris' Doctrines

More specifically about Lethaby's theory, one should stress again the intimate connection of Lethaby's thought with the values of the Arts and Crafts Movement and again note that in the generation after Morris, Lethaby was the Movement's most important spokesman. In the obituary written by Beresford Pite and Maurice Adams, Lethaby is described as the "undoubted successor" to Ruskin and Morris, and Ward noted, in 1957, that Lethaby was even then claimed, like Morris and Webb, as a champion of the Arts and Crafts, despite the accommodation he made in later life with the machine.³⁶ Lethaby, to the end of his life, seems never to have wanted to recant any more of the teachings of Ruskin and Morris, or for that matter Webb, than absolutely necessary.³⁷ He extended the effectiveness of Ruskin's and Morris' point of view into the twentieth century although in these later days, unlike the earlier ones when some aspects at least of Ruskin's and Morris' thought were considered revolutionary in

³² "William Lethaby's Buildings," p. 135.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. One might connect this, in the context of discussing relationships between Lethaby and early twentieth century German architecture, with the Bauhaus which used unique lettering of its own as an important design element on the school building's exterior.

³⁶ Respectively, *The Builder*, 1931, pp. 138-138, and "Lethaby – architect, designer and teacher," *Design*, [month] 1957, p. 44.

³⁷ Lethaby refers to Webb's theory as an inspiration to throughout his life.

nature, this perspective was looked upon by many as conservative and no longer valid. This was the case in regard to such an important part of Ruskin's and Morris' outlook as the concern with morality in art and architecture.³⁸

Significance as a Critic – Advocate of Relevant Forms, Good Quality Construction, Appropriate Architectural Education and Better Management of Existing Natural and Cultural Resources

Lethaby was one of the most important architectural critics of his period. On some issues he was also one of the most persistent. He lashed out continuously, arguing on both practical and aesthetic grounds, against the utilization in contemporary work of elements derived from the historic styles. Fitzroy, who was also convinced of Lethaby's aversion to the counterfeiting of the past through the employment of the "styles," predicted that Lethaby would be remembered "as one of the damning opponents of the overwhelming modern sin of sham."³⁹ Lethaby effectively criticized contemporary English building practice, making charges not only about the applicability of the historic styles, but also about shoddiness and the lack of functionality. The educational processes which produced the architects who committed the modern-day architectural sins of which he complained also fell under Lethaby's scrutiny and were found wanting. Lethaby criticized, as well, what society had wrought at a larger scale than that pertaining to individual buildings, scoring the existing state of the man-made and natural environment. His disposition to look at issues affecting architecture in this large framework was unusual for an architectural writer of his time as was, in his preservation commentary, his withering criticism of the stewardship that had been and was being applied to Man's architectural legacy from the past.

³⁸ Banham has observed this also but perhaps goes too far in saying that in inspiring the Germans in further architectural developments, Lethaby (and others of like mind) affected the cross-channel transfer of the English concern for morals in the architectural art. (See Banham, op. cit., p. 46).

³⁹ Op. cit., p. 49.

Significance as a Critic – Certifier of the Benefits of the Machine for His Arts and Crafts Followers – The Machine as a Usable Entity

Although there is much to be said for designating Lethaby as Ruskin's and Morris' twentieth century philosophical representative in matters relating to art and architecture, one must also acknowledge the important departures he made from their point of view. On the key issues of the acceptance of the machine and the use of the newer building materials such as concrete and iron, Lethaby played an important role in British architectural theory. He helped facilitate in England a change in outlook from that which adhered strictly to the principles upon which the Arts and Crafts Movement was founded to that upon which the Modern Movement was based.

As a Proponent of Functionalism

Having performed a number of services to facilitate the aforementioned changes in outlook, Lethaby should be acknowledged as an important proponent of British functionalism. Ward, probably in reference to the last one hundred years, placed Lethaby in the same category as Gaudi, Van de Velde and Macintosh, in calling them the earliest advocates of functionalism.⁴⁰ Lethaby advocated an approach to architecture which was oriented towards the rational satisfaction of the requirements of use ("as" understood in all of the ways Lethaby thought important) and stressed the need to incorporate the benefits to be derived from science, including the application of scientific method, to architectural activity.

Lethaby was also an important figure in the Modern Movement – particularly in the line of development leading from England to Germany.⁴¹ He served as an exporter of progressive English ideas, including a number of his own, which can be linked to such seminal developments in the Modern Movement as the appearance in Germany of the Werkbund and the Bauhaus. One can concur with Stephen Bayley who, commenting on the significance of Lethaby's ideas vis-à-vis those of a particular Continental figure of primary importance in the Modern Movement, has written: "Why is Lethaby

⁴⁰ Ward's series of lectures on Lethaby, given at the Royal College of Art in 1957.

⁴¹ Bayley, *Op. cit.*, p. 31, has also noted this.

important? For one thing, simply because, with less messianic force and with a good deal more reason, he said the same things which were later to make Le Corbusier a magus of modern architectural theory.”⁴²

Lethaby's Contribution to Architecture (continued) – Introduction: A Most Comprehensive Integrated Approach

What he taught us was that life and all its aspects were part of a whole and not made up of watertight compartments. Whether it was business, art, conduct, they all had to fit in together if we were to build up a fine and ordered civilization.⁴³

Thus, Lethaby's friend Harry Peach put his finger on the single most important characteristic of Lethaby's thought, the one which touches most interesting aspects of his theory – his integrative approach which seeks to establish an interactive relationship between a wide array of elements. Lethaby's dedication to and success at integrating an array of elements of concern into his theory of architecture seems, to this writer, to be Lethaby's most important contribution to architectural thought. In the following pages (most of the remainder of this chapter) some reminders will be given which, hopefully, will serve as a convincing demonstration of the comprehensive integrative processes resident in Lethaby's theory – a theory which shows a kind and degree of integration that surpasses that of every other modern architectural thinker.

Integration – Art and Science

One general type of integration which Lethaby worked towards (re-integration, actually, to Lethaby's mind), involved the effective, complementary combining of the Arts and the Sciences in architectural activity. Basil Ward has observed that Lethaby noticed what he considered to be unhealthy divisions between “art” and “science” not only in contemporary architectural work but in society-at-large and that he persistently maintained that “science was not the enemy of art.”⁴⁴ Although the initial basis of Lethaby's architectural thinking was the perspective of the Arts and Crafts Movement, grounded in

⁴² Ibid., p. 29.

⁴³ “A Short Address given at the Art Workers Guild Memorial Evening, 28th April, 1932,” typescript, p. 12.

⁴⁴ “Lethaby – architect, designer and teacher,” July, 1957, Design, p. 46.

considerations belonging more to the realm of Art than to Science, in his later years, a more balanced view as to the roles of Art and Science prevailed.

Integration – Rational and Irrational

Another type of integrative process present in Lethaby's theory concerns the pursuit of the "rational" versus the "irrational" in architecture. Lethaby's insistence on the rational ingredient (i.e., functionalist-oriented) is a key part of Lethaby's theory, but it is interesting that he believed that the irrational should also play a role. His first book, Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth, documented the presence of "magic" and "wonder" in earlier architecture but Lethaby was to say on a number of occasions that some irrational elements, perhaps changed in character from those of older times, were still needed in modern work – something was needed which transcended the summation of all the attributes of a building which could be associated with the "rational."

Integration – East and West

A further integrative aspect of Lethaby's thought involves his interest in the art, architecture and culture generally of the East and his efforts to use knowledge of this to the benefit of Western society. An interest in Eastern art and architecture has surged intermittently throughout the course of architectural development in the West and Lethaby's attention to the East in the 1890s, as shown in Architecture, Mysticism and Myth (1891) and the monograph he published with Harold Swainson three years later, forms an important part of the larger, late-nineteenth century cresting of such interest in English architectural circles. To look to the East and to attempt to draw something meaningful from whatever knowledge could be acquired (as he did in the 1891 volume) would be apropos of Lethaby's inclinations generally – his commitment to an integrative process in regard to all things, with the elements to be reconciled in this case being East and West.

Integration – Extrinsic and Intrinsic

Lethaby's book on the Hagia Sophia is important not only as evidence of his willingness to look eastward but because it demonstrates the procedure for the new, more inclusive approach Lethaby took as an historian and critic in trying to understand and analyze architectural work. Lethaby's more inclusive approach (as compared to prevailing custom) entailed seeing a building not only in terms of its formal attributes but also as a response to social, religious and political needs of that time and as a function of the technological and economic constraints of the period (including such considerations as might be governed by individual circumstances of construction. Lethaby's approach permitted a more thorough understanding and appreciation of those developments in Western architecture (Gothic, for instance) less related to the classical tradition which ordered the major aesthetic systems in Lethaby's day and to which much formalist analysis of the time was tried. Contemporaries of Lethaby such as Frankl and Worringer chose a parallel course to Lethaby's in seeking an expanded set of criteria to use in understanding art. Worringer, for example, realized that formalist criteria would not suffice for a satisfactory understanding of non-Western art. An American contemporary of Lethaby, the aesthetician Santayana, also broke with the predominantly formalist models of the time as employed by such eminent writers on art and architecture as Wölfflin and Fry.

Integration – Society-at-large and Architecture in Particular

In Lethaby's thought too, one finds another kind of integrative process – in Lethaby's case derived most immediately from Ruskin. This involves the attempt to make connections between the general moral, ethical and political attitudes of society and the architecture that society produces. One major assumption of the preoccupation is that the general attitudes of society have an important bearing on the architecture that society produces and that the architecture, conversely, affects the society that builds it. The other major assumption, related to the second clause of the foregoing, was that architecture expresses societal attitudes and conditions. In his criticism, Lethaby suggested that contemporary architectural ills

were related to more pervasive flaws of the society which the architecture served. He wrote disapprovingly that, in his time, architecture reflected materialism, consumerism and plutocracy.⁴⁵

Vertical Integration

Lethaby's thinking is also distinguished by what could be called "vertical" integration. This involves a commitment to take a unified aesthetic approach in regard to various manifestations of the visual environment of varying scale – a commitment which was also an important aspect of Lethaby's ideological parent the Arts and Crafts Movement. The idea, as drawn from the Arts and Crafts Movement, was to approach the creation of small crafts – goods, elements of interior décor and architecture – in such a way as to reflect a unified set of goals concerning both the productive process and the final product. An additional integrative concern of Lethaby's, also derived from the Arts and Crafts viewpoint, was to make new buildings "fit into" the local environment in which they were placed, to see that they responded sympathetically to their surroundings through the use of indigenous materials and the forms of previous built work associated with the locality. But Lethaby, although sharing the aforementioned nuances of an integrative attitude with other members of the Arts and Crafts Movement, enlarged the framework of integration to include a concern about the overall environment, natural and man-made. A much larger

⁴⁵ In this (in making moral determinations about architecture) he followed Ruskin and Morris. Banham has observed that Lethaby carried forward into the twentieth century, the moralistic attitudes of Ruskin and Morris and has called attention to Scott's book, The Architecture of Humanism as the marker for the apex of his generation's revolt against this kind of thinking – that is, against such qualities as "Victorian earnestness." (Theory and Design in First Machine Age, 1960, 1975 printing, pp. 45-46.) Lethaby wrote, for example, in 1923 ("The Building [Builders] Art: Theories and Discussions – part I, "Architect's Ambitions, The Builder, Jan. 5, 1923, p. 9.):

In my time there was no general thought or public sense; we architects just floated along in a world which tried to be content with sham Jacobean houses for Manchester manufacturer[s?] and sham medieval churches for Oxford clergy – ostrich architecture. Now at the moment there is some demand for department stores which seem smart to shopping women, and for 'picture palaces' to dope the people – dividend architecture. But these, too, can hardly last long....

Two years later Lethaby selected for quotation a similar passage from the writings of John T. Emmett: "Architects, to obtain a seeming credit for their ill-conditioned art, lavishly bedeck their buildings with expensive ornament to make them fit for plutocratic society." (Phillip Webb, 1955, reprinting of Lethaby's 1925 series from The Builder, p. 84.) These thoughts of Emmett's appeared in The Quarterly, (and were also privately printed as Six Essays in 1891). See also Lethaby's observation: "An architect now is an entrepreneur to advertisement firms, a butler to new richness, or an acolyte to Oxford clergy." (Scripts and Scraps, n.d., version 2, p. 8, RIBA Drawings Collection.) A similar point of view to that of Lethaby's was taken by Lewis Mumford, an admirer in America. See, for example, such works from Lethaby's time as Sticks and Stones (1924).

context than that associated with the creation of an individual building, its contents and the immediate milieu was involved. For an architectural writer of his time this was an unusual, perhaps unique, development.

Horizontal Integration

Lethaby's architectural theory is also interesting for the attention he paid to what might be called "horizontal" integration – the focus of this integration being the final architectural product. Lethaby stressed the necessity for all who worked towards the creation of a building in its most complete form – architects, engineers, contractors, craftsmen, artists – to work together closely, to be familiar with each other's work and to be ready, wherever possible, to apply to their own discipline that which could be learned from the others. This latter point Lethaby stressed particularly in regard to interactions between architects and engineers – but Lethaby wanted an integrative approach involving a number of disciplines in the process of architectural design. Also, Lethaby believed that the designer (the person who was involved in the "thinking" end of design) should keep close connections with the workman/craftsman (at the "doing" end). Among architects themselves, he stressed another form of integration – the collaborative approach as opposed to individual action.⁴⁶

Integration – Education and Practice

Lethaby's call for an integrated effort in building extended to the educational process as well. Lethaby realized that the flaws he saw in contemporary architectural work could only be fundamentally corrected by changing the nature of the education architects receive. One aspect of this was Lethaby's belief that, at least for a part of their education, it would be good if architects and all others who were to be involved in the building arts were educated together.

⁴⁶ Gropius' enthusiasm for the collaborative approach was similar.

Integration – the Maker’s Product and the User’s Product

Lethaby looked at the architectural product from an integrative standpoint in that he not only took into consideration what value such a product had for the user, but also what value it had for the maker. Was the making of the product a worthwhile activity for the actual producer, the worker? Could the worker be happy doing this work and be afforded the opportunity to express his “soul” in it. These concerns of Lethaby, of course, were shared with other proponents of the Arts and Crafts position.

Integration – Past and Present

Lethaby also tried to integrate the Past with the Present. To be sure, he believed it was not desirable to copy the forms of the past in present day work nor did he think anyone should be deceived into thinking that one could with enough effort and/or talent authentically create a new work in a particular “style” from the past. But Lethaby reasoned that some lessons from the past, those, for example, having to do with fine craftsmanship and methods of using materials, could be applied in the present. In practice, Lethaby, like other architects associated with the Arts and Crafts, tried to provide some link through form and materials to the traditional/historical work associated with the area in which a new work was to be placed, while abstaining from the specific copying of old elements. Also related to the integration of past and present are Lethaby’s preservation concerns. Lethaby attempted to enlarge support for efforts to conserve architectural work from the past, enlarge the scope of what were considered legitimate preservation interests and replace the destructive procedures of “restoration” with a more careful approach to caring for man’s architectural legacies.

Integration – Foreign and Domestic

Finally, on the subject of foreign/domestic integration one should mention that Lethaby tried to use his knowledge of architectural activity in other countries, that relating to contemporary work and also to preservation activity, to reinforce his arguments about what he believed should be done in his own country. He wanted to avoid repeating in England the errors that he thought had been or were being committed abroad, including the development abroad of what he perceived, disapprovingly, as new

“styles.” He tried to use positive developments abroad, past and present, as inspirations for domestic activity.

Closing

Lethaby was undeniably important in the developments leading to the primacy of “modern” architecture but the Modern Movement, despite the fact that one can associate some of its characteristics with Lethaby’s ideas, evolved into something which, in a number of ways, was opposite to what Lethaby wanted. Even in his own later years, the “modern” approach being articulated on the Continent, despite the wide parameters implied by associated pronouncements of theory, came to be more restrictive in terms of the ultimate form that the actual architectural product might take than Lethaby’s own directives would allow. In Robert Stern’s terminology, it came to be the difference between an “exclusive” approach (“modern” architecture) and the “inclusive” one Lethaby wanted.⁴⁷

This study has hopefully demonstrated the unique position Lethaby occupies in the story of British architecture and has documented the points which define this position insofar as his theory is concerned. It is hoped that the study has contributed a little to a more complete understanding of British architecture in Lethaby’s time.

To provide a terminus, it seems right to call on Lethaby’s friend, Sydney Cockerell, to provide a more general (or perhaps, rather more personal) assessment of Lethaby:

To sum up the qualities at short notice were, indeed, an impossible task. A certain childlike simplicity must be mentioned first. Then his nobility of outlook, his self-effacement, his learning, his wit, his penetrating vision, his industry in research, his fairness in discussion, his sympathetic encouragement of young students, his general loving kindness, his scorn for all that is shoddy, pretentious, and base.⁴⁸

Cockerell noted also that throughout his life Lethaby “behaved with an unswerving integrity of thought, speech and conduct” and did Lethaby considerable justice in observing:

⁴⁷ Stern, New Directions in American Architecture (originally 1969, 1982 revised edition).

⁴⁸ Blunt, op. cit., p. 91, offered after Lethaby’s death.

He has certain limitations and some prejudices but seemed to me to be as nearly as possible a flawless man.

APPENDIX A

THE INFLUENCE OF LETHABY AND THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT

This chapter discusses Lethaby's influence mainly as a function of the overall influence of the English Arts and Crafts Movement but also deals with more specific (personal) aspects of Lethaby's influence where possible. The first part of this Appendix contains some general observations about the nature of Lethaby's influence, and then, in considering the work and thinking of various other architects, some additional comments. The second (largest) part of the Appendix discusses the influence of and connections to the English Arts and Crafts as it might concern various selected architects grouped according to country (and in one case, the region within that country). The last (third) part provides some comments by others about Lethaby's influence.

Assessing the effects of Lethaby's theory on his contemporaries and near-contemporaries and on those who have come later is difficult. Lethaby's influence is sometimes of a direct nature but more often seems to be indirect. In some his influence may have come to bear both directly and indirectly. Similar attitudes relating to one or more key points of Lethaby's theory existed among Lethaby's contemporaries but this does not mean necessarily that Lethaby was, in some way, responsible for their similarity. Another problem in commenting about Lethaby's influence on others involves the cases where there may have been substantial interaction between Lethaby and another person who had also evolved and identifiable theory—one which might even be quite similar to Lethaby's in some regard. In cases of this sort, there is the possibility of mutual influence and also the possibility that one set of values (i.e. theory of one person) might have served to reinforce the other.

In attempting to gauge Lethaby's influence it should be born in mind that he has been credited with being the intellectual leader of a number of English organizations (in the last decades of the nineteenth century and first two, at least, of the twentieth) identified as progressive in their activities. Such organizations which enjoyed Lethaby's intellectual leadership and which, in some cases, could count him as a founding member, have been brought up into previous chapters and Lethaby's role in their activities

have been discussed. These include the Art Worker's Guild, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, the R.I.B.A. Education Board, the London Central School of Arts and Crafts, the Royal College of Art, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. In discussing what influence the foregoing organization exercised it would be logical to give some measure of credit to Lethaby. In fact, Lethaby's indirect influence acting through these organizations must have been considerable. The indications of how dominant Lethaby may have been intellectually within these organizations is provided mainly through the testimony of the other participants. Lethaby himself was quite self-effacing—a quality he may have cultivated on inspiration from his mentor, Philip Webb. As Brian Thomas noted in 1957: "Professor Lethaby is to me rather like the central personality of a play whom the other characters discuss but who never actually comes on the stage."¹

The organizations mentioned in the preceding paragraph were either directly mechanisms of arts and crafts expression or were subjected to a strong arts-and-crafts influence through Lethaby's participation and that of his philosophical kinsmen. And, self-effacing or not, for the latter half of the period of English Arts and Crafts vitality (a time of diminished presence, then even the absence of Morris and Webb) Lethaby was the Movement's major theorist and spokesman.

Lethaby's influence, whether direct (where a specific connection can be suggested) or indirect (through his participation in organizations) can often be limited to the precepts of the arts and crafts point of view. So synonymous did Lethaby become with the accepted expression of arts and crafts theory that when it occurred that Lethaby's own thinking underwent a shift towards a greater enthusiasm for science and technology, and towards a greater acceptance of the machine and of new materials that the contemporary arts and crafts perspective would countenance, the centroid of the arts and crafts viewpoint was shifted, although consequently, there was some alienation of formerly more closely aligned colleagues.

¹ "William Richard Lethaby, 1857-1931—A Symposium in Honor of his Centenary," Part I: "Formative Years," R.I.B.A. Journal, April, 1957, p. 218.

The Impact of Lethaby's Theory on that of British Contemporaries

In commenting first on the effect of Lethaby's theory on that of his countrymen (on their theory, that is) one could start with a few words relating to Lethaby's only real contemporary rival as an articulator of Arts and Crafts theory, C.R. Ashbee. Ashbee's theory is similar to Lethaby's and one could suppose that there was some mutual influence. Lethaby's prominence was greater (although Ashbee has his own considerable accomplishments) and he was six years Ashbee's elder, but such evidence alone is not much on which to base the conjecture that Lethaby had more effect on Ashbee than vice-versa.² Among other Arts and Crafts members with an interest in expressing their thoughts in written form (i.e. who expressed something of their theory in print) and who have some connection with Lethaby, Halsey Ricardo and Reginald Blomfield come to mind. Both (but Bloomfield only for a time) seem to have held values similar to Lethaby's. Though three years his junior, Lethaby may have been a greater influence on Ricardo than the reverse. Certainly, Lethaby wrote more and is more important overall in the leadership position of various arts and crafts groups.³ Lethaby's ties with Ricardo are perhaps stronger than those with any other contemporary. Blomfield, whom Lethaby had met early on, as a student at the Royal Academy, was also close to Lethaby personally and philosophically in his early days.⁴ That Blomfield's point of view, in his earlier years, was similar to Lethaby's is demonstrated in some of his writings from the 1890s. Blomfield's and Lethaby's essays were published in the same volume in 1897 (with Ricardo's included also)—in connection with their talks at the Fifth Annual Show of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society the year before. Again perhaps, despite his being slightly the younger, Lethaby must have

² Ashbee mentioned Lethaby but not, at least as encountered by this author, vice-versa. Ashbee, like Lethaby, became a Master of the Artworkers Guild as well as founding his own guild and school.

³ There are plenty of instances, of course, where the personality with which the public is less familiar has considerable influence on the one more in the public eye, although the case of Lethaby versus Ricardo does not appear to be one.

⁴ When Lethaby became the London Central School's first principal, Ricardo became its first teach of architecture. Both were members of the Artworker's Guild (and both served as Masters); they also collaborated on the Liverpool Cathedral competition and on the competition for the Letchworth Garden City. Blomfield was a fellow member in the Artworker's Guild and had joined several others, Mervyn Macartney and the two Barnsley brothers, under Lethaby's leadership in founding the short-lived crafts firm, Kenton and Company.

influenced Blomfield more, based on the consideration of his various leadership roles, at least until Blomfield opted for a revived classicism and veered away from the arts and crafts.

Two other prominent countrymen of like mind to Lethaby, met in Shaw's office, made some contribution to theory as well as practice—Mervyn Macartney and E.S. Prior. It was noted in chapter one that Macartney served as editor of the Architectural Review for a number of years, thus having that opportunity to express his views; Prior became Slade Professor of Art at Oxford. Lethaby, Prior and Macartney as mentioned shared a period of employment in Shaw's office and were mutually involved in the founding of the Artworkers Guild and its predecessor, the Saint George's Art Society. In these contexts, Lethaby is said to have been more the leader and so one might conjecture that his influence on Prior, at least in the years before the turn of the century was greater than Prior's on him.⁵ Macartney's case is similar. Older than Lethaby, like Prior, he seems to have accepted Lethaby's leadership while in Shaw's office, where he shared a longer common tenure with Lethaby than had Prior. Like Blomfield, however, Macartney, in later life, moved to a classicizing approach, abandoning many tenets of arts and crafts theory.

Some influence of Lethaby on the art historian Herbert Read (b. 1893) might also be posited. We know that Read's approach to the analysis of art was of a combining type—joining the more formalist (intrinsic) approaches associated with Wölfflin and Lethaby's English contemporary, Roger Fry (despite his early arts and crafts connections) and the wider approach (extrinsic) with which Worringer (to some extent) and Lethaby can be associated. This latter component of Read's theory might have drawn some sustenance from Lethaby, who continued in the later stages of the Arts and Crafts period in England, to articulate the “extrinsic” approach. Significant portions of Read's career lie beyond Lethaby's death, but we know that even by 1922 (about eleven years before Lethaby's passing) Read was supportive enough to attend an important testimonial dinner for the older man.

⁵ Service, Edwardian Architecture-A Handbook to Building Design in Britain – 1890-1911, 1977, p. 19, mentions that Lethaby and Prior remained “close friends and allies all their lives.”

As to the residue of Lethaby's ideas on later English thinking (as opposed to practice) not much can be claimed—as several other writers have noted. Two diverse suggestions about later related architectural thinking might be made, however. One is that the SPAB, which Lethaby helped establish and led, still embraces a very conservative philosophy compared to later preservation methods. In a much different sphere, some proposals from English architects in the 1960s (e.g., the Smithsons and the Archigram group) though radical in concept, indicate a kind of concern for the larger issues of the visual environment (e.g. issues of urban scale versus those relating to individual buildings) that might owe something to Lethaby.

The Impact of Lethaby's Theory Outside England

The effect of Lethaby's thinking on the theory of those outside England is, for the most part, at least as difficult to assess as that about his domestic influence. Not much detailed study seems to previously have been done by others in this area and this study will be able to expand only a little on this limited knowledge. It does appear that most of whatever credit can be given Lethaby for influencing the theories of non-English thinkers on architecture would be of the indirect rather than the direct type, with the exception of his more easily documented effect on Herman Muthesius. But Lethaby's indirect influence, although difficult to gauge, must be of some significance in those cases where the effect of the English Arts and Crafts Movement was quite strong.

Germany

The thinking of the German architect Muthesius was directly influenced by Lethaby's. There may be other German contemporaries of Lethaby's who, though personal contact with Lethaby in England (as in the case of Muthesius) or through such contact occurring when Lethaby was abroad (he made a number of trips to Germany, it should be remembered) were directly influenced by him. Such direct impact on the theory of foreign architects could result also from a familiarity with Lethaby's writings (either in the original English or in translation). It was pointed out in the chapter on international connections (Chapter XIV) that there was at least one instance of Lethaby's writing being translated into German. At the

present time, however, based on previously published comments on this topic and the two previous unpublished theses on Lethaby available to this author, there is not much that can be said on the subject of which foreign architects may have actually have read Lethaby's writings and if so, which of them.

The possibility of Muthesius' direct contact with Lethaby were discussed in Chapter (XIV) and others. Also brought up previously was the coverage of Lethaby's built work by Muthesius through publications and the high regard for him Muthesius indicated in the written passages accompanying the illustrations of Lethaby's work. Muthesius was also inspired by other Arts and Crafts architects and he seems to have especially fastened on, it has been observed by Pevsner, to what he found to be the "reason" and "simplicity" of their buildings.⁶ Suffice it to say that Muthesius took the inspiration he received from the English Arts and Crafts and attempted to explore the possibilities of doing in Germany with the machine what had been achieved across the Channel with hand-tools.

Another German contemporary of Lethaby's, one with a relevant connection to Muthesius, is Hans Poelzig. His appointment in the first decade of this century as head of the art academy in Breslau is interesting in the context of Lethaby's influence because Poelzig's appointment is credited to Muthesius. The acceptance of the challenge by Poelzig at his art school to effect Muthesius' ideas (including the exploitation of the machine's potential in matters relating to art production) as in similar occurrences elsewhere in Germany, can be tied ultimately to the catalyst of the latter's English (but anti-machine) inspiration. A similarity of Poelzig's circumstance to that of Lethaby (and the English Arts and Crafts generally), unrelated to the machine issue, could also be mentioned. This involved Poelzig's stress on not rejecting the past in all ways and instead, properly utilizing it. His essay of 1906 (for the Third German Exhibition of Applied Art in Dresden), for example, shows this.

America

The strongest influence of the English Arts and Crafts on the theory of American contemporaries, in the field of architecture, seems to have been felt by Gustaf Stickley, whose architectural philosophy

⁶ Nikolaus Pevsner, Pioneers..., op.cit., 1975 paperback ed., p. 32

was expressed principally through his policies as editor of the influential American Arts and Crafts magazine (The Craftsman) begun in 1901 and through the writings he contributed to it himself. Lethaby's particular influence must have been felt mostly in an indirect way by Stickley, although there were for Stickley direct Anglo-American arts and crafts contacts, the most important being those mainly to do with Englishman C.A. Ashbee.⁷

The last mentioned was also the main English contact for someone who had an even greater impact on American architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright. There are a number of similarities in Wright's thinking to that of the English Arts and Crafts and there is good reason to think that the English Movement generally had an impact on his thinking and thus, perhaps, would also come Lethaby's influence. As noted, Davey has called Ashbee Wright's closest European friend.⁸ In Wright's writings, his emphasis on the importance of the appropriate use of building materials is an aspect of his theory held in common with English Arts and Crafts thinkers although Wright's readiness to utilize newer building materials (especially concrete) comes in advance of that of many Arts and Crafts builders—Lethaby being one exception in this.

Wright spoke before an American counterpart of the English Arts and Crafts organizations, the one in Chicago in 1901, and thus had contact with such groups at least by that date.⁹ But Davey also has pointed out that Walter Crane, Morris' associate, had lectured and exhibited at the Art Institute around the end of 1891, in Chicago, the vicinity of Wright's practice at that time, and that Ashbee's guild had exhibited at the Chicago Architectural Club by 1898.¹⁰ Also, Davey has observed that Ashbee himself gave ten lectures in Chicago in 1900, and that this was the time when his friendship with Wright actually

⁷ Davey, p. 183. Davey mentioned that Stickley also met Voysey on the same trip to England in which he came into contact with Ashbee. (Ibid.)

⁸ Ibid., p. 195.

⁹ See Wright's "The Art and Craft of the Machine," delivered at Hull House, Chicago, 6 Mar., 1901.

¹⁰ Davey, op.cit., p. 188.

first began. Ruskin's Seven Lamps, Davey notes, had been one of the first books owned by Wright and that Morris was one of his early heroes.¹¹

The part of Wright's theory having to do with his attitude towards the use of the machine in architecture cannot be attributed to Arts and Crafts connections, but the stress he puts in his theory (and in practice) on requiring building design to respond clearly to its context (site), especially as to the need to express the particular locality or region (e.g., in his "Prairie" architecture) is close to English Arts and Crafts thinking and to Lethaby's especially. This attribute of theory is also encountered in other architects from Lethaby's time practicing in America, some of whom, like the other Prairie School architects and the Austrian-born Richard Neutra, had been influenced by Wright. These people will be discussed at greater length later in a discussion linking Lethaby's theory to foreign practice. However, it is worth noting here another characteristic of Neutra's theory which is similar to Lethaby's—an interest in expanding the perspective of the architect to include considerations not usually addressed in contemporary practice. As previously noted, Lethaby's view of what criteria should be considered in building design was wide; Neutra's interest in the incorporation of data from the behavioral sciences in design deliberations, while not completely analogous to Lethaby's approach shows, in principle, the same commitment to embracing a wider framework of reference.

A few other non-English counterparts of Lethaby might be mentioned as to their common approach in theory to that of the English Arts and Crafts. In these areas, however, the English influence would have to be viewed as supportive in nature, as opposed to, as in the case of Stickley and at least partially for Wright, formative. An example of this kind of link to Lethaby would include Wright's mentor, Louis Sullivan, whose most interesting connection with the Arts and Crafts approach perhaps has to do with a similar attitude towards architectural ornament. Pevsner has remarked that Sullivan's views on ornament—mainly the point about the possibility of doing without it, at least for a while, especially if it was the historicizing kind which he thought was no longer relevant and his development of a unique new

¹¹ Ibid, p. 190/

expression in ornamentation—were probably formed independently of English influence. Sullivan is on record by 1892 in “Ornament in Architecture” as advocating that architects try getting along without ornamentation, or replacing what was presently in use with “organic” ornament.¹² At least one earlier and one contemporary similar expression of opinion on this subject (by English Arts and Crafts thinkers) is known, however. An exponent of English Arts and Crafts theory, Walter Crane, had said in 1889, two years before, while lecturing in Chicago (Sullivan’s home locale), that plain surfaces were acceptable and Voysey had, by 1893, advocated getting rid of ornament. Although evidence of this attitude exists earlier in his practice and he may have said so in talks, no record has been found of Lethaby saying anything similar until 1903.

Elsewhere on the Continent

Another contemporary parallel to English Arts and Crafts theories on the Continent, is the thinking of Berlage in the Netherlands. He is known to have paid tribute to Ruskin specifically and Berlage’s work, from the 1890s shows the fine craftsmanship and the careful, knowledgeable use of materials advocated by the Arts and Crafts thinkers, including Lethaby. Berlage’s Amsterdam Stock Exchange from 1898 shows the correspondence in practice to this aspect of Arts and Crafts theory but also, in his work, there is manifested an acceptance of cast-iron (see the exposed and visually dominant structural work surmounting the Trading Room) to a degree not approached by (and not acceptable to) the English Arts and Crafts architects. Exponents of the English Arts and Crafts in general could be called conservative on the architectural use of newer building materials and even Lethaby, who is the most important thinker of this group to take a more enthusiastic attitude toward the use of these building materials (e.g. cast-iron and concrete) in architecture (especially in his later years), never used iron products in any noticeable way in his work. In his theory, however, as pointed out earlier, Lethaby took at least as permissive a view of the use of this material as Berlage even in his earliest writing. For example in 1889, breaking with Ruskin to some extent, he suggested that cast-iron was an acceptable building

¹² Pevsner, *Pioneers...*, *op.cit.*, 1975 paperback ed., p. 28.

material and the next year wrote that, while he did not wish to see a new architecture founded on the use of iron, stressed that all architectural materials, the more recently developed and the more traditional, should be regarded as having the potential to make a unique contribution to architecture even though (and in this he followed Ruskin) one material might be ranked higher in an aesthetic hierarchy than another.¹³

There is also an observation to make in the context of the current discussion about the theory of the Belgian Henri Van de Velde. Although Van de Velde took a pro-machine stance (uncharacteristic of Arts and Crafts thinking), his defense (in 1914, for example) of the desirability of individual expression in art (as compared to standardization) is very close to the viewpoint of the English Arts and Crafts. Van de Velde's positive attitude about the machine is shared by one major theorist of the Arts and Crafts at least, Lethaby himself, but Lethaby fully arrived at this position about two decades after Van de Velde, whose positive opinions on the machine were on record by 1893.¹⁴ Another point in common with the English Movement is Van de Velde's case was that (like Lethaby) he headed a school of Arts and Crafts—in Van de Velde's case—the one in Weimar from 1902 until 1914.

The Impact of Lethaby's Theory on Later Work

Elements which can be related to aspects of Lethaby's theory—namely his integrative approach—have again appeared after a long hiatus, succeeding the period of unquestioned dominance of the International Style. The emergence of this can be seen in such American architects as Robert Venturi and Charles Moore. Rebelling in the 1960s against what they felt were the overly confining strictures laid down for designing in the “modern” idiom, Venturi and Moore, like Lethaby earlier, have opted for a more “inclusive” approach. Two other practicing American architects, Michael Graves and Robert Stern, although perhaps less “populist” in the range of design elements and/or means they are willing to use than Venturi and Moore, indicate that they share with Lethaby, at least a resolve to respond to a set of design

¹³ These points as discussed in the main body of this study. See: “Of Cast Iron” (1889), *op.cit.*, pp. 47-48 and “Cast Iron and Its Treatment...” (1890), *op.cit.*, pp. 273-274 and p. 279.

¹⁴ Pevsner, *Pioneers...*, *op.cit.*, 1975 paperback ed., p. 29.

criteria larger than those of the “exclusivists” (as Stern calls them) of the Modern Movement. Lethaby, no doubt, would question the classicizing elements all four Americans have incorporated in their designs on occasion, although these actions often could be seen as a logical extension of Lethaby’s beliefs about giving meaning to a building through the visual associations which can be mustered up. Another aspect of Graves’ thinking is also similar to Lethaby’s—his belief that a building’s expression of meaning through form and ornament is one of its important functions. None of the American architects just mentioned, however, have referred to Lethaby as a source of inspiration to the knowledge of this author.

Among those more well-known in the “post-Lethabian” times for their writings on architecture, whether or not they are practitioners, are several figures who should be taken note of in the context of the present discussion. One is the Norwegian historian/architect Christian Norberg-Schultz. An interesting aspect of his architectural writing has been his concern with meaning in architecture, a concern which stands out also in Lethaby’s theory. In both cases, meaning is allowed wide scope of definition. On another point one can mention the German art historian E.H. Gombrich who has shown, like Lethaby earlier, in his own methods, a commitment to accepting a wide purview of data (the “extrinsic” perspective) in understanding and interpreting art.¹⁵ The important American architect and writer Lewis Mumford, an admirer of Lethaby (as well as vice versa) also has shown in his writing on the visual arts, values similar to Lethaby’s.

Two final and rather diverse observations will be offered as to the influence of Lethaby’s theory on later architectural thinking in other countries. The most tenuous connection, wherein Lethaby’s influence would be realized indirectly, as part of the impact of the English Arts and Crafts generally, is to certain kinds of architecture officially sanctioned and/or encouraged under the National Socialists in Germany. The National Socialists, suspicious of the leftist associations of those involved in the development of the International Style in the ‘20s and ‘30s, and addressing a constituency that was by-and-large traditionalist in regard to building form, encouraged (among several other categories of work) some types of

¹⁵ Neither of these men, to the knowledge of this author, has referred to Lethaby as a source, but again, as with Venturi, Moore, etc., it must be admitted that this issue had not been pursued very far.

architectural expression which had similarities to the work of the earlier English Movement. Of course, an Arts and Crafts tradition had developed earlier also in Germany, without complete dependency on the English movement, but the latter, when its influence was felt on Germany through the efforts of Muthesius and others, besides altering to some extent the character of the native development may have strengthened it. It is possible, perhaps, to link Lethaby's thinking to National Socialist architectural theory in a diffuse sense, although there would be some irony here, considering Lethaby's commitment to real socialism. The other observation which connects the thought of Lethaby to later theory pertains to the American preservation organization—The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (founded in 1910). The group's outlook, somewhat conservative when viewed in the total context of contemporary attitudes towards preservation is similar to that of England's SPAB. The SPNEA (the acronym for the American group) may have been inspired by the older English organization and thus have experienced, indirectly, Lethaby's influence.

The Influence of Lethaby's Theory on Practice in His Day and Later—Domestic Influence

The influence of Lethaby's theory on the architectural practice of others takes many of the same avenues already discussed in the context of the impact he had on theory. Lethaby's influence on practice, however, it would seem, is something of wider diffusion (potentially at least) than his influence on the theories of others, but, to a large extent, involves equally, problems concerning specific attribution. As in the case of the foregoing discussion on the influence of Lethaby's theory on that of others, Lethaby's impact on practice might be classified as either direct, or, via the various Arts and Crafts organizations in which he played a leading role, indirect.

Looking first at Lethaby's contemporaries in his own country as to the question of the influence of his theory on their practice, it can be stated that the impact of Lethaby's views on the various architectural practitioners associated with Art Workers Guild (AWG) constitute a direct form of influence but one of a complex nature. The Guild does not seem to have ever pursued a policy of attracting much public attention, especially in its earlier days, so that Lethaby's influence as a result of his own Guild activity,

must have been of a direct nature. However, the potency of the Guild, partially attributable to Lethaby's contributions, must have had its effect on some of those outside it. The activities of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (an outgrowth of the AWG), in which Lethaby was also decidedly a leader, would also be a vehicle for both Lethaby's direct influence (on other members), and indirectly, through the society's externally oriented activities (e.g., exhibitions and accompanying symposia).

A detailed analysis of Lethaby's influence as mentioned in the foregoing lies beyond the aims of this study. We know that Lethaby's ties with some other Arts and Crafts architects were stronger than with others so there is more likelihood of Lethaby's philosophy affecting one man's work than another's, although some with whom Lethaby's personal contact was more slight, may have been significantly influenced by absorbing his lessons from a distance. There are other possibilities of Lethaby's direct influence through his SPAB activities (both relating to preservation concerns and to wider architectural issues), and through his teaching at the London Central School and at the Royal College of Art. The SPAB exercised influence on the preservation practices of those outside its own membership and thus, there is a good chance of Lethaby's indirect influence. Likewise, the results of this teaching activity must have had an effect through indirect means, as those whom he had taught passed his point of view along to others. His leadership on the R.I.B.A. education board must have had some direct influence on the teaching views and general attitude about architecture of at least some of the other participants and Lethaby would have had a much more significant, indirect influence on architectural education had the Institute provided more support for the implementation of the syllabus that the board had prepared.

Other small groups in which Lethaby played an influential role include Kenton and Company and the one which assembled to submit an entry in the Liverpool Cathedral competition. Amongst the employees is Shaw's office, without the advantage of seniority in age, Lethaby has been credited with being the intellectual leader of this group (the constituents of which were discussed in Chapter 1) and thus of some influence on the group's members. Lethaby's influence was felt also through his participation in the activities of other organizations of diverse character (e.g., oriented towards such non-architectural foci

as politics, education, history, etc.) But Lethaby's influence (really of a direct, but not personal nature) in all matters related to architecture was no doubt felt most through his publications.

Lethaby seems sometimes to have been in the position of influencing men older than himself (as with Ricardo and Muthesius and probably, Prior and Blomfield) as well as peers and those younger. Shaw (Lethaby's employer) too had said good naturedly, but no doubt with veracity, that Lethaby was his teacher.¹⁶ Two notable examples of Lethaby's direct influence on the work of younger men involve the architects Ernest Gimson (who also seems to have influenced Lethaby, at least through introducing him to the SPAB) and Randall Wells (who had been Lethaby's clerk-of-the-works at Brockhampton).¹⁷ Wells' church near Lethaby's slightly earlier one at Brockhampton, reflects, as has been noted earlier, the progressive ideas Lethaby expressed in All Saints.

Influence on Practice in the United States - Midwest

As to other contemporary practitioners, Lethaby may have influenced, besides those in his own country, one could turn to the United States. The great American architect H.H. Richardson did have known connections with the Arts and Crafts, stemming from his visits to England (last in 1886) where, as noted earlier, he might even have met Lethaby and through his collaborations with English artists in Morris' circle like Edward Burne-Jones and with American Arts and Crafts-oriented artists (like John La Farge) and artisans. But Richardson died too soon (1886) for Lethaby himself to have had much impact.

Lethaby's influence on the work of Louis Sullivan, almost his exact contemporary, has not been studied by this author, but as pointed out earlier in the chapter in relating Sullivan's theory to Lethaby's, the attitude towards ornament seems to be the strongest connection between the Beaux Arts-educated Sullivan and the attitudes of the English Arts and Crafts architects. Sullivan's views on abstaining from ornament had emerged, at least by 1892, as noted earlier, but many of this most well-known works were

¹⁶ Robert Weir, William R. Lethaby (1938), op.cit., p. 9.

¹⁷ Gimson seems to have always enjoyed Lethaby's respect, even after the latter was unsuccessful in rallying Gimson to a more positive view towards the machine.

still to come and he could have, in the 1890s especially, derived some additional support (at least) for this, and other positions, held in common with the English Arts and Crafts practitioners. Walter Crane, representing the English Movement's point of view (including attitudes about ornament—i.e. greater simplification and abstraction) had been in Chicago by very early 1892 and in the public view; later in the decade, Sullivan could have seen the exhibits of Ashbee's guild there in 1898 and later met Ashbee himself when Ashbee came to Chicago in 1900. The American magazine House Beautiful (Chicago-based) illustrated the work of British Isles' architects Baillie-Scott and Voysey before 1908.¹⁸ With access to the English periodical the Studio, Sullivan could have seen Lethaby's own design work (craftwork, that is) as well as that of other English Arts and Crafts practitioners, by 1893. Lethaby's indirect influence would seem to be of more importance—for example, via the influence the Art Worker's Guild may have had in America. The Guild, which Lethaby helped found, was six years old in 1890, and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, which Lethaby also helped found, existed for three years by that date. Also, by the end of the 1890s, Lethaby had for four years served as principal of the London Central School, an institution which had an impact on American art education.

The possibilities of the influence of Lethaby's theory, direct or indirect, on Wright have already been commented on in the context of Wright's theory earlier in this discussion. There is much in Wright's early practice—the rejection of historical styles, the restraint in ornament, the asymmetrical arrangement of spaces occasioned by a more direct response to function, the commitment to fine craftsmanship and a desire to utilize building materials properly (as so perceived) and to their full potential—that is in agreement with Arts and Crafts theory in general and Lethaby in particular.

Chapter IX also pointed out Wright's and Lethaby's similar interests in the architectural applications for concrete. Wright's experiments with this material are exactly contemporary with Lethaby's, although basically of a different nature, and predate by at least a decade, Lethaby's published advocations to experiment with new building materials and to accept them as having legitimate

¹⁸ Davey, op. cit., p. 199.

possibilities in construction. Lethaby would have approved of, in principle if not of the resultant form, of Wright's experiments with new methods of construction with concrete blocks, as in the system Wright used in his Millard House of 1923 in Pasadena, California. Wright knew earlier (c. 1917), of similar methods developed by his former employee Walter Burley Griffin, but the abstractly textured blocks he used in the Pasadena House can be related back to earlier work by Wright himself—to his Midway Gardens (1913-1914) in Chicago, which utilized in part, concrete blocks with relief ornament of a geometric character.¹⁹

Like Lethaby, Wright took an interest in problems relating to urbanism. But most of Wright's more notable activities associated with urban planning came after Lethaby's death, beginning in the 1930s (see especially Wright's ideas for a "Broad-Acre" City, 1934 to 1958, and the completion of a "Broad-Acre" City study earlier, in 1932.

Wright, of course, could have developed some design characteristics similar to those of the Arts and Crafts (e.g. the rejection of historical styles for example) from his mentor Sullivan, whose own approach does not appear to owe much overall to the English Arts and Crafts. The earliest commission of note conventionally attributed to Wright, though technically a commission of his employer Sullivan, the Charnley House (of 1891) shows a stronger debt to Sullivan than Wright's later work, but two years later (1893), Wright's Winslow House, in the Chicago suburb of River Forest, Illinois, begins, with such features as the asymmetrically arranged forms (and spaces) visible in the posterior view of the house, a steady move away from Sullivan's Beaux-Arts inspired symmetry and towards the asymmetrical planning approach held in common with contemporary Arts and Crafts architecture in England.

One more point in common which Wright had with the English Arts and Crafts (and especially Lethaby) concerns architectural education. The conduct of Wright's studio involved the training of architectural apprentices initially proceeded essentially in the traditional manner. But after Wright moved his studio from Oak Park, Illinois, to "Taliesin" (near Spring Green, Wisconsin) the apprenticeship

¹⁹ Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (1971), *op.cit.*, p. 440.

process began to take on more the flavor of an architectural school. At Taliesin (and Taliesin West in later years) apprentices were encouraged, as Lethaby had urged, to learn by direct contact something of the craft work for which they would later be responsible in a design capacity, as practicing architects. Also, as Lethaby advocated, Wright's young architectural disciples were kept in close contact (often performing the work itself) with the construction projects in which they were involved as part of their activities at Taliesin.

Other talented architects of the American Midwest who participated with Wright in the development of the Prairie School idiom share to a large degree common design attributes with Wright. The members of this group interacted with Wright in a number of ways, including having employers in common in their younger days, sharing adjacent office space later, having common membership in organization and groups (formally constituted and informal) and, in some cases, being employed by Wright himself. Mostly Wright's age of younger, but some born (e.g. Irving and Allen Pond) like Lethaby in the previous decade, and with careers, for the most part beginning in the same decade as Wright's (1890s), these architects would have been in a position to experience in the 1890s approximately the same sort of design attitudes attributable to the English Arts and Crafts Movement as Wright. The impact on these American designers can be traced to such events as the English Arts and Crafts exhibition of 1898 in Chicago, to the English lecturers with an arts-and-crafts orientation who came to the United States in the 1890s and later, and to those English periodicals promoting arts and crafts material which were available in Chicago by 1890 or earlier.²⁰ Beginning in 1897, there would have also been the influence of the English-inspired Chicago Arts and Crafts Society.

Walter Burley Griffin and George Elmslie can serve as representatives of the much larger number of Prairie School architects, initially all based in Chicago and the vicinity, who also pursued the Prairie School idiom in relatively undiluted form until, as in the case of the Arts and Crafts in England, the First World War stopped this American strain of the Arts and Crafts momentum. Griffin had worked with

²⁰ One important English periodical for the Arts and Crafts was the Studio, begun in 1893. By 1897, the international version (International Studio) was also available.

Wright for about five years, beginning in 1901, during which time Wright could have helped encourage in Griffin's thought those values traceable to (or at least sympathetic with) English Arts and Crafts philosophy.

Some interests of Griffin call to mind those of Lethaby, some not particularly associated with (in fact, perhaps antithetical to) the basic Arts and Crafts perspective. An example would be their ideas as to the use of concrete in architecture. Griffin, like Lethaby (and Wright) was interested in exploring the possibilities of this material. Griffin's two concrete houses in Mason City, Iowa (the Page and the Blythe houses of 1912-13) probably could be more easily related to the climate of technological experiment which had been present for decades in the Chicago area where Griffin had been active earlier (and to such attitudes on the part of his employer, Wright) than to Lethaby's written approval of such a material only advanced (albeit widely-read) with clear enthusiasm a year earlier (1911), in Architecture. Griffin's development of "knit-lock" blocks (patented in Australia in 1917) also shows his interest in experimentation with materials—an activity which Lethaby had urged (writing about the use of building materials generally) as early as 1890. Elmslie, who had emigrated to the U.S. from Scotland, joined the staff of the architect Silsbee the same year as Wright (1887), and two years later, also with Wright, entered into Sullivan's employ. This direct contact with Wright for about four years (until Wright left Sullivan's office in 1893) in addition to later interactions, insured that Elmslie too would be affected by Wright. But the component of Elmslie's thinking which might be traceable through Wright to the English Arts and Crafts perspective because of the time at which Elmslie's most direct contact with Wright occurred and because Elmslie was never actually employed by Wright, as was Griffin, would not be as great as that of Griffin.²¹

²¹ Also, Elmslie, coming from Scotland, may have been more directly acquainted with Arts and Crafts precepts in the British Isles, even before emigrating. Sullivan's impact on Elmslie, who stayed with him for almost twenty years, is of more importance than Wright's. Purcell, the Prairie School architect with whom Elmslie went into partnership in 1906, had also been employed for a time with Sullivan.

Influence on Practice in the United States – East Coast

Already mentioned in the discussion of Lethaby's theory as an influence on the theory of others is the connection to another American, Gustav Stickley. Stickley's main inspiration from England came through his contacts with Ashbee as Peter Davey, for example, points out.²² Stickley, after meeting Ashbee in England in 1898, as previously noted, returned to the United States and reorganized his crafts-shop more like Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft. But Stickley had contact with other participants in the English Movement, as has been mentioned. Some influence on Stickley by the English Arts and Crafts can be credited to the general potency of the movement (via activities like exhibitions) in which case Lethaby could be a factor. Stickley's main effect on the American Arts and Crafts movement, one which was quite significant, began in 1901 with his founding of the arts and crafts magazine, The Craftsman. The periodical widely increased the demand for the arts and crafts furniture produced in Stickley's crafts-shop and also furthered some other important Stickley enterprises connected with house construction.

In addition to Stickley's trip to England, there was the possibility of contact with those Arts and Crafts-related artists coming to the United States (as early as the 1890s, as noted). Stickley would have had access by 1890 (or earlier) to the same British periodicals which Sullivan and Wright did, carrying textual and graphic material relating to the Arts and Crafts Movement. Some of this material (as previously discussed) would have been generated by organizations in which Lethaby was a leader, for example, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, and, as pointed out, Lethaby's own craftwork was published in such periodicals by 1893.

Turning specifically to architectural issues as they relate to Stickley and the Arts and Crafts movement, note should first be made of the nature of Stickley's contribution. In textual form Stickley demonstrated in The Craftsman evidence (his own writing and that of others selected for publication) that he had clear ideas of what should constitute the ideal "Craftsman" house and that also, early in the magazine's existence (from at least 1903) Stickley provided graphic material to accompany his text. This

²² Davey, op.cit., p. 183.

graphic material helped describe the various architectural alternatives falling within what Stickley said was the “Craftsman” approach to housing. Such material continued to be provided until the magazine ceased publication in 1916. A variety of approaches are encountered in the various house designs published but they all reflected in essence (and for the most part, in detail) the design ideals of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. The commitment to fine craftsmanship, simplicity of design and the eschewal of ornament are common themes running through the craft-objects the architectural elements in the interiors and in the housing designs generally that were illustrated in The Craftsman. No evidence has been obtained by this author as to whether Lethaby was aware of the material appearing in The Craftsman (although it is quite possible that he was). However, it is very probable that he, like other English Arts and Crafts architects, would have approved of much that they would have encountered therein, with a few exceptions. An example of the latter would be what seems to be a self-conscious attempt, in the designs for the houses that were published, to overlay them with certain stylistic themes which, even though generally drawn from the vernacular (Lethaby would have supported that), seem to aim at presenting “regional” stylistic variations in a rather arbitrary, superfluous manner.

Also related to the realization of arts and crafts work in the United States were some of Stickley’s branch enterprises such as his Home Builders’ Club (from 1903) which provided to members, the house designs he had published in The Craftsman, and his Craftsman Home Building Company (from 1910) which directly undertook construction work, at least in the New York area close to Stickley’s location.

Stickley had close personal involvement with house design and house building, but he also worked with architects. These architects also played an important role in the realization of the designs and the expression of related ideas associated with Stickley’s enterprises. The most prominent person in this connection was the outstanding architect-draftsman Harvey Ellis. Jean R. France has noted that Ellis began writing for The Craftsman in 1902 and contributed several house designs (as well as ones for

furniture) to the magazine before his death in 1904.²³ Ellis surely became acquainted with English Arts and Crafts developments and at least would have felt the indirect impact of Lethaby's theory through his contact with Stickley. France observed that the effects of the English Arts and Crafts had already shown up in Ellis' work by 1891. This seems generally plausible (but with less probable impact, even indirectly, by Lethaby).²⁴

One might mention also in the context of English Arts and Crafts influence (and Lethaby's indirectly) the American Elbert Hubbard, who, like Stickley, organized a community of crafts organization in the eastern United States. The aims of Hubbard's community had parallels with English Arts and Crafts groups. Hubbard had visited Morris in England in 1894 and returned to East Aurora, New York, where he had chosen to settle the year before, to organize the art community known as the Roycrofters. It is beyond the aims of this study to comment in detail on the effects of the English Arts and Crafts Movement on artistic practice in America other than that related to architectural activity, but it should be mentioned that Hubbard, who was not an artist or architect himself, was important in the fostering of American crafts production (although less involved with architectural concerns) and this can be linked to the English Movement. The complex Hubbard built at East Aurora was sympathetic in character with the ideals of the English Arts and Crafts architects, and Hubbard, an almost exact contemporary of Lethaby, might have experienced some direct influence from his, especially as a result of his trip to England. Through the impact of the relevant English periodicals which had circulated in the United States from the 1890s and before, the English Arts and Crafts (and Lethaby's indirect influence) could have been a factor in the formation of Hubbard's attitudes about crafts production generally and also had an effect on the realization of Hubbard's architectural constructions at East Aurora specifically.

²³ Jean R. France, "Harvey Ellis: Architect," essay in the catalog A Rediscovery—Harvey Ellis: Artist, Architect (Rochester, N.Y.: Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, 1972), pp. 21 and 23.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 19. France cited M.H. Baillie-Scott, C.F.A. Voysey and Charles MacIntosh as the most identifiable English Arts and Crafts sources in Ellis' work. But while it is true that Voysey could have had some impact by 1891, it is unlikely that Baillie-Scott and MacIntosh could have had much in the United States before 1894 and 1893 respectively.

In the East, another American whose architectural designs can be connected to the influence of the English Arts and Crafts was Will Bradley. Initially earning acclaim as a printer and typographer, Bradley later achieved success through his proposed architectural interiors and house designs that were published from 1901 until 1905 in the Ladies Home Journal, then a particularly influential publication in the United States in matters relating to art and architecture. Bradley's designs (those having the most important architecture impact being the series in the Journal of 1901-1902 detailing the various elements of design of the "Bradley House") reflect the character of English Arts and Crafts work. Roberta Wong posited that Bradley, in the design just referred to, was "fully aware" of the ideas of like-minded individuals in England and the United States.²⁵ Wong singled out Baillie-Scott and Voysey especially as overseas examples of this (as well as Wright, whose Prairie School style has "crystallized," as Kenneth Frampton has said, in house plans appearing in the same periodical the same year and the year before).²⁶ As with several of the American designers discussed in the foregoing pages, Bradley could have experienced the influence of the English Arts and Crafts Movement in the 1890s, both through familiarity with the work of specific architects like Voysey and Baillie-Scott and through the more generalized force of the movement in which Lethaby was a factor. Even the influence of Wright, around 1901, could have acted as a conduit for the propagation of the English Arts and Crafts principles in Bradley's case for, as noted earlier, Wright himself had much rapport with the Movement and his theory and practice shows a number of common attributes.

Influence on Practice in the United States – California

In California, the most prominent architectural practitioners of the first quarter of this century often exhibited in their work some attributes in common with the English Arts and Crafts Movement. This would include Charles and Henry Greene, whose devotion to fine craftsmanship, "honest" expression of

²⁵ Roberta W. Wong, "William H. Bradley," catalog entry in The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, Robert Judson Clark, ed., Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 32.

²⁶ Frampton, Modern Architecture-A Critical History, 1980, p. 60 and Wong, op.cit., p. 32.

materials, restraint in ornament, and a functionalist approach to planning has much in common with earlier and contemporary English Arts and Crafts work. Also, like the English Arts and Crafts architects, Greene and Greene, practicing mostly in partnership, concentrated mainly on domestic design. Oriental architecture, however, played a more noticeable role in much of their most interesting work, as in Wright's, than in English Arts and Crafts work and the lengths the Greene's went to to articulate construction connections went quite a bit beyond what the architects of the movement in England did. The Greene's, like other early California architects, could have become aware of the activities of the English Arts and Crafts through periodicals (as was the case with designers in Chicago and in the eastern United States) after the start of their California practice in 1893, if this information had not come to them earlier, before they came west. Also, from the turn of the century on, at least by means of periodicals, they could have absorbed those lessons of the Midwest's Prairie-School idiom (including that which was arts and crafts-related) through the publication of Wright's work and that of like-minded designers in the Chicago area. Developments of the American Arts and Crafts Movement could have also influenced their thinking. Some acquaintance with The Craftsman is certain for, by 1908, this American arts and crafts magazine carried an article about them.

Another California contemporary of the Greene's who should be mentioned in discussing similarities of West Coast American work to the Arts and Crafts approach is the Beaux-Arts-trained but stylistically very eclectic Bernard Maybeck. Some of Maybeck's work shows qualities which can be related to that of the English Arts and Crafts.²⁷ Something more specifically relating to Lethaby's theory, however, is his bold experimentation with materials—the newer ones as well as the more traditional. Maybeck's use of laminated wooden arches for Hearst Hall, Berkeley (1899) could be cited. Also, like Lethaby, Maybeck is notable for his interest in the architectural applications of concrete. His use of it (e.g. the Lawson House, Berkeley, 1907) predates Lethaby's first clearly enthusiastic comments in print

²⁷ Note in this context, for example, the following California projects by Maybeck: Hearst Hall (Berkeley, 1899), the Outdoor Art and Clubhouse, Mill Valley (1905), the Hopps House, Ross Valley (1905), Randolph's School, Berkeley (1910), the Christian Science Church, Berkeley (1910), the Chick House, Berkeley (1913), and the Bingham House, Montecito (1917).

about the use of this building material, although not Lethaby's actual employment of it at Brockhampton (1901). Lethaby's call for the acceptance of the new materials (really an old material not used to any great extent from ancient to modern times) in his writings certainly finds its contemporary parallel in Maybeck's practice. Following the Lawson House there is also, among other instances, Maybeck's use of concrete in the building of the Christian Science Church (1910) although the California architect never used the material with the directness of expression that Lethaby did at Brockhampton.

If the building of Maybeck's Christian Science Church [location, date] also there were other applications of new methods of assembly and materials—factory sash and asbestos panels—while his later Glen Alpine Cabins at Lake Tahoe (1923), which rustic in form, featured corrugated iron for the roof and factory-type metal sash for wall panels and for doors. Maybeck's Principia College designed in 1923, originally intended for a St. Louis site but built only in 1938 in nearby Elsah, Illinois, was constructed of reinforced concrete, which Esther McCoy tells was left unsurfaced for the most.²⁸ The architectural expression it seems, at least in places, was very close to that of English Arts and Crafts work although McCoy describes Maybeck's designs as "Tudor."²⁹ Maybeck it should be noted in regard to connections in his work to English Arts and Crafts theory, was also much affected (as McCoy has observed) by the San Francisco Bay-area version of the Shingle Style he encountered upon situating there in the 1890s. This artistic expression is related to Shaw's Queen Anne style (and thus to some extent the Arts and Crafts).³⁰ McCoy relates that, in the early 1890s Maybeck worked for a brief time in the Bay Area for an English architect (Ernest Coxhead) who valued a craftsmanlike approach and had arrived at a fortuitous combination of the local shingle style and the Queen Anne Style as it was expressed in his native England. Like the Greenes, Maybeck would have had available to him, from the 1890s or earlier, whatever was appearing in print in American and English publications relating to English Arts and Crafts

²⁸ Esther McCoy, Five California Architects, Praeger Publishers, N.Y., 1975 (orig. publ. in 1960) p. 54. Eight buildings for Principia were completed.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 5.

activities, and also information related to American arts and crafts, to Wright's work, and to other Prairie School architecture. Maybeck's academic post, held from 1894 to 1901 at the University of California at Berkeley (his was the first appointment, leading to the founding of a school of architecture there), must have facilitated his access to publications and perhaps the demands of the position were conducive to heightening his awareness of architectural activity elsewhere, including that of the English Arts and Crafts.

Another principal architect from the earliest days of twentieth century practice in California, Irving Gill, also can be linked to the English Arts and Crafts as Davey has observed. Gill's ties involve the restraint (abstinence, really, in his case) that he pursued in deciding questions about ornament for his buildings and his commitment to creating architectural forms appropriate to their cultural context. Also, there is Gill's interest in low-cost housing which paralleled the concerns for the working-class of the often socialist-oriented English Arts and Crafts architects (including Lethaby). Similar to Lethaby's particular architectural theory as expressed in later years (but not so related to the orthodox Arts and Crafts position) is Gill's acceptance of and utilization of new building materials (such as concrete) and his experiments with new, machine-aided building technologies. On the subject of contextual form-giving (one of the points mentioned above), the difference between Gill's work and that of the English Arts and Crafts architects is the difference between responding to a Spanish colonial vernacular (intermixed to some extent with Southwest American Indian architectural elements) and a tradition heavily infused with a vernacular expression growing from roots in medieval times.

On three other points mentioned above (approach to ornament, use of new materials, and experimentation with new processes of building) Gill took a more radical approach than the English Arts and Crafts practitioners. This can be illustrated by the following: Gill's Wilson Acton Hotel (1908) and Bishop's Day School (1909), both built in La Jolla, California, presented a very bare, ornament-free appearance—an appearance closer to that of the stark Steiner House in Vienna of slightly later date (1910) by the Austrian architect, Adolf Loos than to English Arts and Crafts work. By 1904, in Gill's own house in California, he was already trying innovative approaches to construction (with traditional building

materials) that were unusual for the time and, in 1912, he devised his well-known tilt-up, machine-dependent construction process used in the construction of the La Jolla Woman's Club in 1914. By 1908 Gill was building the first of many structures in reinforced concrete and, although these post-dated such experiments with the material as Lethaby's at Brockhampton (1901), they do pursue a greater structural sophistication by utilizing, unlike Lethaby's work, metal reinforcement.

In comparing the foregoing aspects of Gill's work to corresponding points in Lethaby's theory one can note again the latter's call for experiment with materials from at least 1890 and his suggestion, rather clearly made by 1903, as to the possibility of doing without ornament in architecture. His opinion on this latter issue, however, seems only to have been expressed in widely read publications (like The Builder) in the following decade—as are his statements most clearly enthusiastic about new materials like concrete.

In regard to another issue, it can be noted that Lethaby's interest in defining the architect's role as one of service to society has its parallel in Gill's practice. Gill, besides designing residences for affluent clients, had an interest in the housing problems of the working man. This is shown in his designs for housing in a company town context around 1910 and his design for some barracks in 1911 which were aimed at improving the quality of habitat of Mexican laborers in California. This same year, in his well-known book Architecture, Lethaby urged that civic awareness (manifested in love of country, for example) was important for architects. Lethaby's call in 1913 for improving cities seems to be associated with the idea of social responsibility also; however, his most direct arguments—that architecture should be seen as service to society—only emerged in 1917 and after. Earlier, Lethaby in practice, had played a role in the design activities attending the construction of the Passmore Edwards Settlement House (1895) in Bloomsbury, a design credited principally to Smith and Brewer, and through his influence on the architects of the London County Council Architect's Department from the late 1890s (at least) until the First World War. The work of the LCC Architect's Department in these years, which includes the design of some notable examples of workers housing, owes a considerable debt to the Arts and Crafts. As Davey has noted, the younger members of the Department were in contact with Lethaby (as well as with Webb and Morris) through mutual participation in the activities of the SPAB. These architects may have known

Lethaby in the context of the latter's more visible roles as an educator as well, at the London Central School and at the Royal College of Art (RCA).

McCoy has pointed out that it would have been difficult, in the small, then relatively remote town of La Jolla which was Gill's California base, for him to have had easy access to a publication containing Loos' well-known stricture against ornament of 1908, "Ornament and Crime." It may also have been more difficult than for Chicago architects of the same time for Gill to gain access to the American and English publications which covered the activities and theories of the English (and American) Arts and Crafts after his arrival in Southern California in 1893.³¹ But even if this were the case, Gill did not remain continuously isolated in the then sparsely settled southern-most part of California. He sometimes traveled back to the east coast as in 1902, for example, when he worked on commissions in Rhode Island.

Gill may have also been aware of some Arts and Crafts principles through his durable friendship with Wright. He and Wright had been in Sullivan's office in Chicago at the same time in the early 1890s and the friendship continued long enough that Wright sent his son Lloyd, then twenty, to work in Gill's office. Gill also met Wright-trained Prairie School architect Barry Byrne in California in 1913. Byrne, in the work of his Prairie School phase at least, showed, like other exponents of this school, a similar debt to the English Arts and Crafts as that of his former employers Wright and Griffin. Perhaps Gill, with similar roots, received through his contact with Byrne a reinforcement of those elements of his own point of view which can be related to the arts and crafts although the influence of Gill on Byrne (Byrne was Gill's junior by thirteen years) is more often pointed out.

Another possible connection to the English Arts and Crafts concerns some of Gill's early works like the Birckhead House (1902) in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, an expressions of the Shingle Style—an idiom with connections to the Queen Anne mode, one of the principal idioms used in the earlier work of Lethaby's former employer, Shaw. Also, although it comes near the effective end of the Arts and Crafts

³¹ McCoy, p. 73.

Movement (in both the United States and England) it is known that Gill was familiar with Stickley's arts and crafts publication The Craftsman, at least by 1916, when he contributed to it himself.

On the issue of the need to experiment, Gill's tilt-up construction method has already been mentioned as a possible example of the kind of experimentation which Lethaby advocated, but it can also be noted that Lloyd Wright (Frank Lloyd Wright Jr.), not long after his employer Gill's experiment, used a lift-form construction process in the building (in 1915) of a hotel in Riverside, California. Lethaby's call for experiment finds its parallel also in Lloyd Wright's development of textured blocks in 1919. Lloyd Wright and his brother John Lloyd Wright, both had been exposed to the arts and crafts-related principles of their father. (John Lloyd Wright had worked in his father's office—in 1914, for example.) This would also be true, of course, of Wright's other staff and students, from the early ones such as Marion Mahoney, Barry Byrne, William Drummond, and John Van Bergen (who had earlier worked for Griffin) to those who continued in Wright's organization, the Taliesin Fellowship, after Wright's death.

Three other important architects who eventually settled in California had some contact with Wright and others in the Chicago area who shared some principles with the English Arts and Crafts. The careers of these men, the Austrians, Rudolph Shindler and Richard Neutra, and the German, Erich Mendelsohn, will be commented upon shortly when Lethaby's theory is discussed in the context of contemporary architectural practice in the countries of their origin.

One further architectural connection between Lethaby's theory and contemporary American practice concerns the "bungalow"—a popular grass-roots type of house whose prime period of popularity extended from 1900-1920. Well-known architects from one side of the United States to the other provided designs for bungalows but the real appeal of this small house type was accomplished through the mass selling of sundry related designs of anonymous authorship. These bungalow variations sometimes displayed stylistic and/or ornamental identifiable themes, sometimes connected to the context of the locale where they were constructed (as Lethaby would advocate)—sometimes not. In the instances more compatible to Lethaby's point of view, these American designs provided a vernacular stylistic expression which was the analog to the abstractly medievalizing ambient of English Arts and Crafts domestic work.

More similar to English work in other ways than in “style” was the American bungalow’s simple, direct employment of traditional materials and the concern, in the process of achieving (although unlike arts and crafts work, there was an owner-doing-it-himself characteristic) sound building. The American bungalow as a type does seem to owe something to the American Arts and Crafts Movement (Stickley often published bungalows in The Craftsman) and to Wright, whose work exhibits (as noted) some qualities related to those of the Arts and Crafts.

The Influence of Lethaby’s Theory on Architectural Practice in Other English-Speaking Countries Besides the United States.

No effort has been made in this study to precisely ascertain the relationship of Lethaby’s theory to contemporary (or later) architectural practice in other English-speaking countries and other countries outside Europe in which England’s influence has been strong—Australia and New Zealand, for example. It is reasonable to assume that those countries, in addition to the United States, which felt England’s cultural influence in Lethaby’s time must show in their respective architectures, some impact of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. This influence could come by way of relevant publications (those from England, those of the particular country in question or those of other countries), via first-hand accounts (conveyed by people from the British Isles traveling in these countries or by returning nationals) or through the mechanism of education. English art and architectural schools generally must have offered a program superior to that of many countries in which English influence was strong. Students from these countries who had gone to England to study must have had some contact there with the English Arts and Crafts movement—either through direct contact in the institutions affected by the Arts and Crafts thinking (for example, as students of Halsey Ricardo, who served as an instructor in architecture at the London Central School) or through extra-curricular exposure.

There is also the possibility that the English Movement had an impact in these countries through the direct commissions awarded to English Arts and Craft architects for work to take place there. Admittedly, works of this type were relatively few in number (Robert Weir Schultz’s Khartoum Cathedral of 1906-1928 was one) and these commissions did not always result in a pure transplant of the English Arts and

Crafts idiom. However, there were also foreign commissions acquired by English architects who, while not actually the Arts and Crafts Movement members one usually lists, shared important attitudes with this group. This was true of Norman Shaw, some of whose foreign work, for example some designs for buildings in South Africa, even utilized the talents of arts and crafts architects who, in the earlier part of their careers, were working in Shaw's office. Such is the case with Lethaby.

Another connection with English Arts and Crafts design principles came through the overseas work of non-British personalities who can be linked with the English arts and crafts point of view more indirectly. Such instances would include the work of Wright in Japan and the work abroad of other American architects associated with the Prairie School such as that of Griffin's architectural work in Australia. Attributes of this work often shows a kinship with that of the English Arts and Crafts. Also, some work in Canada shows influence of that aspect of English taste related to the arts and crafts indirectly supplied via the Arts and Crafts Movement in the United States, via the Prairie School and later, manifestations of Wright's thought, etc., as well as some direct influence from Britain. Lethaby, as a leader of the English Movement would, of course, be a factor in all of this, but unfortunately information associating him specifically with the propagation of English Arts and Crafts ideas abroad cannot be provided here.

The Impact of Lethaby's Theory on Contemporary Architectural Practice in Continental Europe—Introduction

Lethaby's impact on contemporary architecture in continental Europe was felt, this author believes, both directly and indirectly. His most direct influence occurred, as pointed out in other places in this study, by virtue of his connections with the German architect Hermann Muthesius and through Muthesius to Peter Behrens and other German architectural figures. But Lethaby's influence was felt equally, in aggregate effect, through the impact of the English Arts and Crafts generally on architecture in the countries of continental Europe. The following observations, aimed at helping to define the scope of Lethaby's influence, will be couched mainly in terms of the impact of the English Arts and Crafts

generally, although more direct lines of influence involving Lethaby will also be pointed out. These include aspects of Continental architectural activity which relate to parts of Lethaby's theory though not necessarily those considered essential parts of the Arts and Crafts point of view.

Some aspects of Lethaby's theory, whether part of the orthodox Arts and Crafts perspective or not, find their counterparts in contemporary Continental architectural views. This is true with such components of Lethaby's theory as his urging of experimentation, his acceptance of new building materials, his commitment to the solution of urban problems and of housing needs on a large scale, his views on the reduction of and desirable changes in the character of ornament and his notion of the existence of moral purpose in architecture (especially seeing architecture as "service"). Some important aspects of Lethaby's theory can be traced to earlier thinkers associated with Arts and Crafts theory while others, notably some encountered later in the evolution of his thought—as with his acceptance of the machine and his enthusiasm for standardization—seem to emerge noticeably after related manifestations on the Continent, in which case, of course, no English influence can be inferred and rather, the opposite seems to be the case.

Lethaby's published works and the evidence derivable from his built works must serve as the principle determinants in deciding what aspects of Lethaby's theory relate to architectural activities on the Continent. It should be noted, however, that the first of these two (i.e. published works) does not appear to be quite adequate for understanding Lethaby's viewpoint in the 1880s, because he published relatively little then, or in the 1890s and because some of his most important publications of the late nineteenth century like Architecture, Mysticism and Myth and the monograph on Hagia Sophia, were not concerned principally with contemporary problems. On the other hand, after the first few years of the twentieth century, the second source, owing to Lethaby's effective retirement from practice at that time, ceases to be very promising for making connections.

The influence of the English Arts and Crafts on contemporary European architecture must have been brought about in all of the ways already mentioned in the foregoing discussion relating to English-speaking countries (and non-English-speaking countries in which Britain exercised cultural influence

through political and/or economic hegemony). That is, this could have been accomplished through publications, personal propagation by travelers (architectural professionals and others), through design work produced on the Continent by British Arts and Crafts artisans and architects, and through the training of artists and architects from the Continent in those English educational institutions which proceeded under an Arts and Crafts bias. Influential publications could include not only relevant English ones available on the Continent but also Continental ones which provided coverage of English Arts and Crafts-related developments—books like those authored by Muthesius and periodicals like the German Dekorative Kunst, for example—and through knowledge on the Continent of those American reflections of and/or appreciations of the English Arts and Crafts work appearing in such periodicals as The Craftsman or House Beautiful. Wright's work (whose connections to English Arts and Crafts work has been noted) appeared in the latter magazine by the late 1890s (e.g. 1897 and 1899) while coverage of California architects with links to the arts and crafts approach (like Greene and Greene and Irving Gill) in other American periodicals of wide circulation like The Inland Architect and News Record, the Western Architect and The Craftsman was provided by 1908-09.

The Impact of Lethaby's Theory on Contemporary Architectural Practice in Continental Europe—Otto Wagner

In beginning to comment upon the relationship of the English Arts and Crafts (and by implication, that of Lethaby) to the architecture of Lethaby's time in several European countries, a few words should first be said particularly about two Continental designers whose careers affected some of the other architects to be mentioned—the Dutchman H.P. Berlage and the Austrian Otto Wagner. Otto Wagner, a contemporary of the American H.H. Richardson, is probably the earliest architect to consistently be mentioned as having made a direct, participatory contribution to twentieth century modern architecture in Europe—at least one of the few architects of note born before 1850 to make important direct

contributions to European architecture after 1900.³² (Another person of similar age, Philip Webb in England, was still working at the turn of the century but his impact came with his earlier works.)

Wagner was an important influence on those later prominent Austrian architects for whom one might claim that some effect of the English Arts and Crafts was felt—Olbrich, Hoffman, Loos, Schindler (perhaps even Neutra)—as well as those from other countries, Behrens and Berlage for example. Wagner, despite his prominent position in the Viennese architectural establishment and the classicizing tendency of his earlier work, joined the city's Secessionist Movement in 1899, two years after its founding and one year after Olbrich built his famous hall to serve the group's exhibition needs. Though not a founding member of the Secessionists, Wagner has been credited with providing an important contribution, through his theory, to the start of this group.³³ The Secessionist Movement had some important ties to architects and artists in the British Isles active in the arts and crafts sphere. This included close ties to the Scot C.R. Mackintosh, whose approach was sometimes of an Arts and Crafts character, or in some other instances a fusion of this with Art Nouveau. Wagner himself was on personal terms with Mackintosh, who was an admirer of Lethaby, as well as with Henri van Velde, in whose case one can also note links to the English Arts and Crafts.

In 1895, Wagner participated in informal meetings with younger Austrian designers like Hoffman and Olbrich in which the latest issues of the Studio, then only two years old, were discussed and there can be found from this period (1896, for example) Wagner's positive comments about contemporary English art. Like the English Arts and Crafts architects, Wagner came to advocate the rejection of the historical styles, as Latham states in his monograph on Olbrich and it can be added that Münz and Künstler, in their

³² Others born in the nineteenth century before 1850 had an important impact on modern architecture as well (e.g., Semper, Jenney, Paxton, and Richardson) but this contribution was more indirect in the sense that it did not involve any work of their own in the twentieth century. The observations to follow in the text about Wagner are based for the most part on information provided in Geretsegger's and Peintner's monograph on this architect: Otto Wagner, 1941-1918, Rizzoli, New York, 1979 (associate author: Walter Pichler, with an introduction by Richard Neutra, 1969; translated by Gerald Onn).

³³ Further proof of Wagner's inclination to align himself with the avant-garde elements in Viennese art and architecture came a few years later (1905) when he parted with the Secessionists and with the Klimt group. This departure clearly shows in his Postal Savings Bank (1905) in Vienna.

work on Loos, observed that Wagner's other principal theoretical source (besides Semper) was, as with the English Arts and Crafts architects, John Ruskin.³⁴ It is not known (by this author) how many times Wagner visited the British Isles himself or when these trips may have occurred except that it can be noted that in 1906, still six years before his official retirement from his academic post in Vienna, Wagner took part in the International Congress of Architects in London.³⁵ Lethaby attended this conference and, in fact gave an address ("Modern Architecture and Craftsmanship," published in the Congress' Proceedings as "The Relationship of Modern Architecture to Craftsmanship," 1906). It would be natural that the progressive-minded director of the most prestigious school of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would meet the principal of England's leading art school—one which had already been praised on the Continent. Lethaby would certainly have been one of the key architects in England for such a forward-looking foreigner to meet in 1906. At this time, Lethaby was firmly established as head of the thriving London Central School and was well into his work as first Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art in whose reorganization he had played a leading role a few years earlier. In this year Lethaby also played a prominent part in the R.I.B.A education committee's production of a new syllabus.³⁶ Wagner, incidentally, was made an honorary member and correspondent of the R.I.B.A..³⁷

³⁴ Ian Latham, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Rizzoli, New York, 1980, p. 147 and Ludwig Münz and Gustav Künstler, Adolph Loos, Pioneer of Modern Architecture, Praeger, New York, 1966 (orig. 1964, Vienna). Introduced by Nikolaus Pevsner, with an Appreciation by Oskar Kokoschka.

³⁵ Wagner continued to teach as late as 1915, three years before he died at age 77.

³⁶ In 1906 also, one of Lethaby's more important books was published (Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen) and he joined the company of the likes of Sir Christopher Wren in his appointment as Surveyor to the Abbey.

³⁷ The dates when these English gestures were made to Wagner are unknown to this author. The section Wagner's life in the work by Geretsegger and Peinter (previously cited) contains what is, apparently, an erroneous account of Wagner's involvement concerning Canberra. Drawing on an unpubl. MS by Wagner's daughter (Otto Wagner, wie ich ihn als tochter sah by Luise Wick-Wagner (date not given in Geretsegger and Peintner's citation), the reader is told in Geretsegger and Peinter's work that Wagner was asked "to plan a capital city for Australia and to design all the important buildings" (p. 17, drawing from page 29 of Wick-Wagner.) This must be an incorrect reference to Wagner's prospective jurorship. Immediately following, Geretsegger and Peinter continue the quote from Wick-Wagner re-explaining that Wagner (then seventy-two) was seriously contemplating a "great journey" in connection with the Australian opportunity. Even if Wagner was to have gone only to serve as a juror, the journey would certainly have been great at least in terms of distance!

The similarity of Wagner's theory to that of Lethaby's, besides the point already mentioned about rejecting past styles, can be shown by comparing with Lethaby's thinking Wagner's three principal points about architecture—points on which, he said, the determination of form was dependent. Drawn from Wagner's Die Baukunst unserer Zeit (1914), although he might have advocated these much earlier as well, there are:

- 1) One must grasp the functional requirements of the proposed building.
- 2) One must make the right choice of materials in regard to the building's construction (including considerations of economy).
- 3) The building must employ structure efficiently and economically.³⁸

Lethaby's writings from the 1890s (and especially from 1910 on) show his concern for functional requirements and the attention he paid to the need to choose appropriate materials is seen already in the 1890s. By 1911, at least, Lethaby stressed "efficiency" in architecture and by 1917, if not earlier, "economy."

In Wagner's work two concerns emerge that relate to Lethaby's views, but not necessarily those considered characteristic of the Arts and Crafts as a whole. One is Wagner's interest in urban problems (and planning) which might (although arguably) be regarded as a logical extension of Arts and Crafts theory—i.e. the desire for the attainment of a completely integrated design as of a residence and all the items to be found in it. Parker and Unwin, at least, among English architects with Arts and Crafts ties, aimed at an extension of such design control to the scale of the Garden Cities. In regard to urban problems, Wagner's general plan of 1893 for the regularization of Vienna can be pointed out as an example of his interest in urban problems for London (about the same time as Lethaby's less ambitious proposal of 1896) and Wagner's major study of 1911 (Die Gross-stadt) which grew out of his invitation the year before (not accepted) from New York's Columbia University to address the International Congress of Civic Art to be held in that city. During the 'teen's also, in 1914, Walter Burley Griffin

³⁸ Geretsegger and Painter, p. 33.

invited Wagner to act as a juror in an anticipated competition (which was not held, H. Allen Brooks tells us, because of the war) for the design of a new capital building for the new Australian capital of Canberra which Griffin has earlier won in competition the contract to plan.³⁹

The other related concern of Wagner's has to do with enthusiasm for engineering works, especially the appreciation of these in their "pure" form. Wagner himself provided many designs for dams and bridges as well as for works of a more architectural nature but with a large engineering component, like train stations. Wagner's stations, however, show a kind of exuberant art nouveau-related floweriness in ornamentation (with an underlying classicizing theme) that Lethaby would not have cared for any more than his own country's Tower Bridge in London, an advanced work (in terms of engineering) from the same decade, but clad in medieval detail. On Wagner's Nussdorf Dam (1894) and Stadtbahn Bridge (1898), however, the principle spanning elements (of iron) were allowed to remain as direct and unencumbered engineering expressions (although the abutments were ornamented). This aesthetic treatment of the main spans Lethaby would have found agreeable. Although one can note a positive attitude toward engineering on Lethaby's part as early as 1890, it is only beginning with writings of the second decade of the twentieth century (from 1911) that real enthusiasm is evident.⁴⁰

The Impact of Lethaby's Theory on Contemporary Architectural Practice in Continental Europe—Berlage

As with Wagner, some direct connection to the English Arts and Crafts can be made in Berlage's case although, in this instance, nothing in the way of connections to Lethaby specifically can be cited. Also, as in the case of Wagner, one can note that Berlage had an impact on a number of other European architects with links to Arts and Crafts. Earlier in this chapter, some of the similarities between the

³⁹ H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School*, *op.cit.*, pp. 165 and 285. This competition had been held in 1911 and Griffin was acknowledged the winner in May of the following year.

⁴⁰ Lethaby did, however, as noted in Chapter X more frequently compliment contemporary engineering works on the Continent than those in the British Isles. One other miscellaneous observation in the context of the Arts and Crafts impact on Europe will be noted here. This concerns Berlage's Amsterdam Stock Exchange, a work which is in harmony in a number of ways with English Arts and Crafts ideas. Wagner may have had particular interest in the way this building was actually executed since he had entered the original competition for the building in 1884. (The Exchange was only completed, with modifications, in 1903.)

English Movement and Berlage's approach were pointed out. Berlage, as Singelenberg pointed out in his monograph on the Dutch architect, held similar opinions to William Morris on such issues as the importance of quality in design work, and on the need for a unified approach to design. Singelenberg also observed that Morris' and Berlage's views about contemporary society in general were also similar. Berlage was, like Morris (and for the matter Lethaby), a convinced socialist.⁴¹ But the love for "gothicizing" in design which Singelenberg maintains was a characteristic of Morris' work was not shared, he said, by Berlage nor was Morris' hatred of the machine. In fact, in 1923 Berlage, in some statements in defense of the machine, attacked one of the sources of inspiration of the English Movement, Ruskin, whose views on the subject were even more unyielding than Morris'.

Berlage's views on the need for unity and quality in design and which, like his view of society, were akin to Morris', reached Berlage through Gottfried Semper, Singelenberg maintains, although the latter has pointed out that the painter Jan Toorop, a Dutch contemporary of Lethaby's (Toorop was born the year after Lethaby) was the first propagandist in his country for contemporary English art and also for Morris' emphasis on the social function of art. This must have occurred during Berlage's three-year stay (circa 1875-1879) as a student in Zurich where Semper was a professor (from 1855) at the Polytechnical Institute. Semper was important to Berlage's training in Zurich, Singelenberg has noted.⁴² Semper is also given credit for Berlage's convictions about the necessity to use building materials in accord with their "nature"—a key tenet of Lethaby's theory as well.

Singelenberg has connected Berlage with other personalities of the English Arts and Crafts Movement besides Morris; Berlage is compared to Mackintosh and Voysey whom Singelenberg claims to be the most important architects in the United Kingdom around the turn of the century. Berlage very likely knew of their work. Mackintosh's Glasgow School, Singelenberg notes, was first published on the European mainland in November, 1896 in the just-founded periodical Dekorativ Kunst (published in

⁴¹ Pieter Singelenberg, H.P. Berlage—Idea and Style, Haentjens Dekker and Gumbert, Utrecht, 1972, p. 226. The observations to follow are based largely on information provided in Singelenberg's book.

⁴² Semper (1803-1879) was nearing the end of his life when Berlage was a student in Switzerland.

Munich, then a center for the Jugendstil). Voysey could have come to Berlage's attention as early as 1893 by way of the Studio which covered the English architect's work from the first and which, as noted in the foregoing discussion on Wagner, was accessible to Continental architects.⁴³ Singelenberg has compared Berlage's work to Voysey's house, Chorley Wood (1900) but has maintained that despite the affinity, a "mutual influence is not demonstrable."⁴⁴

One of Berlage's works which shows the greatest similarity to English Arts and Crafts work is his Villa Henny built in the Hague in 1898. Especially sympathetic passages in this work with English Arts and Crafts attitudes are the picturesque overall massing of the villa, and, on the interior, the handling of the appointments in the study and dining room. Among larger works which show an Arts and Crafts relationship, besides the Amsterdam Stock Exchange already mentioned, is the Diamond Cutter's Union (built 1898-1900) in Amsterdam—a commission owed to the patronage of the owner of the just-mentioned villa. The detailing of the Union Council Hall also has a clear affinity to the work of the English Movement.

Berlage came into contact with other architects of the Continent who had experienced the effects of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. Worth mentioning in this context are the Germans Muthesius and Behrens.⁴⁵ Muthesius' links to the English Movement has already been mentioned in Chapter XIV, for example. Those of Behrens will be more fully discussed shortly. Behrens participated in Muthesius' reorganization of some of Germany's educational institutions inspired by Arts and Crafts schools across the Channel and was active in the (also English Arts and Crafts inspired) Deutscher Werkbund. Berlage, Singelenberg has noted, visited Germany regularly (and Austria-Hungary and Switzerland as well)—

⁴³ Berlage's influence on Voysey and Mackintosh is also possible.

⁴⁴ Singelenberg, op.cit., p. 168. The influence of Berlage on his very near contemporary Voysey and the somewhat younger Mackintosh is not considered here.

⁴⁵ Muthesius and Behrens must have been influenced by Berlage whose similarity of approach to that of the English Arts and Crafts could have further reinforced this kind of ingredient in their work.

visiting other architects and giving lectures.⁴⁶ Berlage kept up an active correspondence with people in these countries and tended to read more particularly, partly owing to the convenience afforded by a common language base, the journals published in these countries. Conversely, it can be noted that photos of Berlage's work were sought for publication in Germany; Behrens wrote Berlage five letters on this subject in 1904, commenting appreciatively on Berlage's work in the process. Some of the qualities of Berlage's design approach which can be connected with English Arts and Crafts theory must have been among those valued by Behrens who, himself, was experiencing some impact, either directly or through Muthesius, from English sources. Muthesius also wrote Berlage from Berlin at least twice about the same time Behrens did (May 18, 1905 and September 10, 1906)—shortly before founding the Werkbund. Also, it is known that Berlage wrote the Austrian Josef Hoffman in 1913 (ten years after the latter had founded Wiener Werkstätte) to offer his praise for Hoffman's Stoclet Palace (Brussels) which Berlage had just visited. Apparently Berlage did not perceive the work as too strongly in the idiom of Art Nouveau, a movement which he disliked.⁴⁷

One more Arts and Crafts connection with respect to Berlage can be noted—a more indirect one via Frank Lloyd Wright. Singelenberg has noted that Peter Collins (in Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1965) described Berlage as “profoundly influenced by Wright” but adds that Berlage only became well-acquainted with Wright's work in late 1911 when he visited the United States—at which point in time his own principal architectural contributions had already been made. Singelenberg does point out that Berlage in his lectures in Europe on American architecture the year after he returned from there, became the first important European architect to “attract attention” to the work of Wright although the important European publication of Wright's work appeared at this time as well—that year and the year before.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Berlage gave many lectures in Zurich, for example.

⁴⁷ Berlage intended at one time (1924) to give a lecture in a building designed by another avant-garde architect of Vienna—the Sezession Gallery by Olbrich.

⁴⁸ Singelenberg, op. cit., p.204 (footnote #22).

Austria—Introduction

There are associations that can be made between English Arts and Crafts theory generally, and Lethaby specifically, with the work of the avant-garde architects of turn-of-the-century Vienna—Olbrich, Hoffman and Loos. This is true as well of the somewhat younger Austrian architects, Schindler and Neutra, who, after spending time in the Viennese milieu, made their reputations elsewhere. Four of the five men just mentioned came under the influence, direct influence except in the case of Loos, of Otto Wagner and through him absorbed principles that were very close to those of the English Arts and Crafts, if not actually derived from English sources.⁴⁹ Also beginning in the 1890s these architects, like other Continental architects (including Wagner himself), could have been exposed to the ideas being generated by the English Movement, through the *Studio* magazine. Ian Latham has written that Olbrich and other contemporary Viennese practitioners in the visual arts, including Hoffman and their mentor, Wagner met often in 1895 to discuss the latest issue of this de facto Arts and Crafts organ. Also, as Davey has pointed out, the work of designers from the British Isles Ashbee, Voysey, Mackintosh, and Baillie-Scott was being illustrated in Austrian (and German) magazines around the turn of the century.

Austria—Olbrich

Some links which can be made between Olbrich and the English Movement depend on Olbrich's contact with Otto Wagner, whose connections with the English Arts and Crafts have already been discussed.⁵⁰ Olbrich first came into contact with Wagner during the Viennese Academy's Exhibition of July, 1893, in which Olbrich displayed his final school project. Wagner, impressed by Olbrich's abilities as displayed in this context, offered him a job; Olbrich accepted and worked in Wagner's office for a few months—until November, 1893. Olbrich then left to begin the year of study available to him as the

⁴⁹ In pointing out Wagner's impact on these younger architects it is important to note that, as with Sullivan and Wright, the reverse situation sometimes occurred. Ian Latham (in his work *Joseph Maria Olbrich*, Rizzoli, NY, 1980, p. 12) contended that this is the case with Wagner vis à vis the younger Viennese architects of this circle with respect to such works by Wagner as the Postal Savings Bank and the Steinhof Church.

⁵⁰ Many of the observations made here would not be possible without the information provided in Latham's work on Olbrich previously cited, and the previously mentioned work on Wagner by Geretsegger and Peinter.

winner of the Academy's Rome prize, but in the following spring, Wagner wrote to him in Italy and asked Olbrich to return to Vienna to work in his office. This Olbrich did, but that year also, Karl von Hasenauer, who had been in charge of the special School of Architecture at the Viennese School of Fine Arts died and Wagner, who already held a teaching position at the school, was offered this open headship. Wagner accepted the position and Latham has suggested that due to Wagner's commitments affecting his new post; Olbrich's responsibilities in Wagner's architectural office became quite important. Joseph Hoffman, the Austrian contemporary who also, as mentioned, can be connected to the English Movement also joined Wagner's office staff—in 1894; he had been Hasenauer's prize student in the year of the latter's death, which was also Hoffman's last year in school.⁵¹

In March, 1895, Olbrich left Wagner's employ again to resume his Rome prize travels but this time he travelled west—to Germany, France and England. Latham has remarked that few details are known of Olbrich's activities during this time but, according to Peter Davey, he must have spent most of his time in England.⁵² Olbrich, whom Davey has described as an Anglophile, might have seen a number of works in the English Arts and Crafts idiom during his stay in the British Isles.⁵³ Olbrich returned to Wagner's office before the end of the year and stayed there until the summer of 1899 (a total of five years) at which time he set up his own office. He had done some independent design work while still in Wagner's employ and in this category is a sketch for a small house (from 1898) which shows similarities to English Arts and Crafts work although the vernacular elements which can be noticed are drawn from his own country and the treatment of external surfaces seems a bit more plain than in most work of the English Movement. Olbrich's design for a house for Herman Bahr the following year, although adapted from the 1898 "small house" concept, seems more in the spirit of Art Nouveau. Wagner thought highly of Olbrich (and of Hoffman too). In 1904 he recommended Olbrich for the director's post which had just become vacant at

⁵¹ Olbrich had been Hasenauer's assistant also, Geretsegger and Peintner, *op. cit.*, tell us.

⁵² Davey, *op.cit.*, p. 205, reported that Olbrich spent half of his Rome scholarship time in England.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

the Viennese Academy's second school of architecture (and Hoffman as his own successor, although he was not to retire, in fact, for another eight years).

Olbrich's association with Wagner, his access to published material about English Arts and Crafts work, and his house design of 1898, have been brought up in this discussion of links to the English Movement. Also worth mentioning in this context is Olbrich's involvement with the Viennese Secession Movement. This movement, born of dissatisfaction with the kind of architectural taste and values supported and sanctioned by the Viennese art establishment, is more often linked with Art Nouveau than with the Arts and Crafts Movement. There are, however, some connections with the latter worth noting.⁵⁴

Olbrich was a major participant in the Secessionist Movement. The first general meeting for the Secessionist group was held June 21, 1897 and the next year, in conjunction with the Movement's first exhibit, Olbrich secured his first commission obtained under his own name. He designed the main entrance to the exhibit, which was held in leased premises, as well as designing the main exhibition space.⁵⁵ The setting Olbrich created for the exhibition was to accommodate, among other things, a number of works by the English Arts and Crafts artist Walter Crane, who became the first English honorary member of the Secession group. Also at an early date, by the second issue of the Secessionist magazine, Edward Burne-Jones of Morris' circle was made an honorary member. The next year Olbrich received the chance to design the Movement's permanent exhibition home—the well-known Sezessionist Gallery (1898-99)—apparently edging out another original member of the Movement, Hoffman, who like Olbrich was trained as an architect.

Latham has noted that some contemporary commentary (1898) suggested similarities in the external appearance of the Sezessionist Gallery to Voysey's work and has pointed out some laudatory remarks about the Sezession made a few years later in the Studio which linked the Austrian movement with the work of the Arts and Crafts. On this last point, for example, from 1906: "the 'Secession' has done most to

⁵⁴ There are also attributes which the Art Nouveau mode shares with the Arts and Crafts.

⁵⁵ Hoffman was also involved in a perhaps less aesthetically important way. He was in charge of designing the office spaces.

bring about the modern development in the arts and crafts; it showed what other nations were doing and introduced, among others, the Belgian, English, and Scotch schools to Vienna.”⁵⁶ On the subject of this latter connection it can be noted that Davey has also observed Secessionist links to Scottish work, citing the close connections of the Viennese designers to Mackintosh and others in the Glasgow group whose work is Arts and Crafts-related. In November, 1900, Mackintosh and the English Arts and Crafts leader Ashbee showed their work in Vienna under the auspices of the Secessionist group. Mackintosh’s work was allotted an entire room. Giulia Veronesi, in her account of Hoffman in Hatje’s Encyclopedia... suggested that the Glasgow School (Mackintosh et al.) was the principal influence, along with French Art Nouveau, on the Secessionists.⁵⁷ In a more general comment, Davey notes, without unfortunately elaborating on the point, that the exhibitions of the Sezession were similar in “content” to those of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (whose activities, as has been noted, Lethaby played a prominent role).

Latham singled out a passage written by a Secessionist supporter (and an Olbrich client) Herman Bahr in 1901 as a representative reflection of the views of Olbrich at least while he was in Vienna. The passage, actually written after Olbrich had left the city, is similar to Arts and Crafts concerns in its emphasis on the value of a totally integrated design scheme (using the right approach, of course) and its stress on the communal environment for artists and craftsmen:

We must build a town, a whole town! Nothing else will do ... it means nothing if somebody builds merely one house. How can it be beautiful when there’s an unsightly one beside it? What’s the use of three, five, ten beautiful houses when the street layout isn’t beautiful? What’s the use of a beautiful street with beautiful houses if the chairs inside them aren’t beautiful or if the plates aren’t beautiful? No—[an unencumbered] field [will be needed] ... there we will ... demonstrate what we are capable of, through the layout down to the last detail, everything controlled by the same spirit, the streets and the gardens and the palaces and the huts and the tables and the chairs and the lamps and the spoons, expressive of the same feeling, but in the middle, like a temple in a sacred grove, a house of work, artists’ studios together with craftsmen’s workshops, where the artist would now always have the

⁵⁶ Latham, op.cit., p. 33. Quoted from the Studio, Special Number, 1906, page number not given.

⁵⁷ “Hoffman,” Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture, Gerd Hatje, ed., 1964, p. 147. Similar remarks in the Studio of 1906 (but which credit the English and Belgians as also being influential) have already been noted in the passages on Olbrich.

calm and ordered crafts, and the craftsmen would always have liberated and purging art close at hand, until both would, so to speak, grow together as a single person.⁵⁸

The foregoing parts that can be related to arts and crafts theory would also fit comfortably into Lethaby's specific perspective, yet many Art Nouveau artists also proceeded along similar lines, with results which Lethaby viewed quite negatively.

Olbrich's involvement in the art colony at Darmstadt, Germany gives rise to some other comments about his work as related to Arts and Crafts theory. In offering a few relevant words about that involvement, one should begin by going back a bit before Olbrich's appearance at Darmstadt. The first direct English connections with the Darmstadt colony came in 1897, the year Ernst Ludwig, the Grand Duke of Hesse, first became interested in bringing into existence such an art community. Ernst Ludwig invited Baillie-Scott and Ashbee to decorate the reception room and dining room of his new palace at Darmstadt at that time. The Grand Duke had more opportunity than most Germans to acquire an appreciation for the work of English architects for Queen Victoria was his grandmother. Latham reports that he visited her on a number of occasions in England, implying that these visits preceded his involvement with the art colony.⁵⁹ Latham has noted specifically that the Duke was familiar with the ideas and works of the English Arts and Crafts Movement.

Ernst Ludwig had also travelled to Vienna frequently and must have made Olbrich's acquaintance there or at least became aware of him. In any event, Olbrich was included in the group Ernst Ludwig attracted to Darmstadt to implement his ideas for the colony. Olbrich first visited Darmstadt in May of 1899 (visiting Munich on the same tour) seemingly, based on Latham's commentary, even before he set up on his own in Vienna.⁶⁰ By this time Ashbee's and Baillie-Scott's work at Darmstadt must have attained a state of completion or nearly so as it was covered in German magazines then. That year, Olbrich was invited to join Ernst Ludwig's colony. It appears that he gave up his practice in Vienna

⁵⁸ Latham, page 48, quoted from Hermann Bahr's Ein Dokument deutscher Kunst, 1901.

⁵⁹ The English queen also visited Ernst Ludwig at Darmstadt.

⁶⁰ Latham, op. cit., p.48.

(turning work under way there over to Hoffman) and moved to Darmstadt to devote himself to the challenges awaiting there. On November 25, plans for the first major exhibition for the colony (to be held in 1901) were announced. Olbrich can be said to be the only architect in the original group assembled at Darmstadt, for another initial member, Peter Behrens, a seminal figure in later German architecture had not yet taken up this pursuit. Olbrich became the unelected leader of the group and, for the next eight years, until his death, Darmstadt became, as Latham described it, “Olbrich’s private ground for architectural experimentation.”⁶¹

Virtually all architectural work at Darmstadt was Olbrich’s responsibility except for Behrens’s own house. Most of it was construction of houses, for a goal set for the colony was the building of model (single-family) houses. The total design for each of these was demonstrate in tangible form the possibilities for the complete integration of all the arts in everyday life. Several of the designs made in the process of preparing for the 1901 exhibition show the closeness of Olbrich’s approach to that of the English Arts and Crafts. A preliminary sketch by Olbrich from 1899 shows an affinity with the work of the English Movement although it retains a distinctly German flavor. Olbrich’s own house in the exhibition complex (dating from 1900) also shows similarities to work of the English Movement as in the extensive use of unadorned external surfaces (like Voysey) and the derivation of building forms from the vernacular tradition (in this case, German instead of English) as shown in the handling of the roof.

Olbrich shared with Lethaby more specifically a liking for checker-board motifs. Compare, for example, the checkering on the first story exterior surfaces of Olbrich’s house with similar passages (in different materials) at Lethaby’s Avon Tyrell (nine years earlier, 1891-92) or his fireplace design from the 1870s.⁶² Latham has noted that the large living hall of Olbrich’s house was similar to contemporary

⁶¹ Latham, *op. cit.*, p.50.

⁶² At Avon Tyrell note this treatment for the fireplace in the main hall and on the north and east elevations of the stables.

English examples, especially those of Baillie-Scott.⁶³ A connection to, perhaps the influence of, the English Arts and Crafts Movement is shown in two other houses Olbrich designed in preparation for the 1901 exhibition—the Haus Christiansen (a collaborative effort with the owner; drawings dating from Spring, 1900) and the Haus Keller (1900, especially the exterior). Davey has observed that another construction, the domicile of Ernst Ludwig himself (drawings from late 1899 through early 1900) can be related to that of another avant-garde English architect, Charles Townsend, whose work, if not (by virtue of some Art Nouveau-related characteristics) of this genre, is closely related to it.⁶⁴ English architects themselves were not deprived for long of native-language coverage of the work of Olbrich and others dating from the 1901 exhibition—it was covered in the *Studio* in 1902.

Housing and particularly low-cost housing (a priority of Lethaby's too) was a concern of Olbrich's at least in his later years. But not many of Olbrich's ideas on this subject (nor Lethaby's for that matter) reached architectural reality. Of interest amongst Olbrich's designs for housing are three single-family houses—compact and emphasizing simple construction; houses which were, Latham tells us, influenced by Baillie-Scott's submittal for the German-sponsored “House for an Art Lover” competition (1900).⁶⁵ Other housing schemes by Olbrich which correlate with Lethaby's concerns about housing include the Dreihäusergruppen of 1904 and the Opel Arbeiterhaus of 1908. The latter undertaking (the Opel Worker's Home) was produced for the Darmstadt colony's exhibition of 1908—an exhibition which, in large part, was aimed at low-cost good design for the lower and middle economic classes. These one and two family structures are like those of the English Movement in their clean, direct approach but, as an attribute of their formal expression, reveal a higher roof profile than would be encountered in English Arts and Crafts work. By way of a more general connection, Latham observes that only by 1900 were the real problems of low-cost, quality housing addressed by Continental architects (including, one assumes, the German

⁶³ Latham, *op.cit.*, p. 58. Olbrich's house was opened to the public May 15, 1901, but it was not occupied by its owner until the end of October of that year.

⁶⁴ Davey, *op.cit.*, seems to consider Townsend to be an Arts and Crafts architect.

⁶⁵ The treatment of the curved end gables are similar in each architect's design. Latham has given the date of the competition (sponsored by the German magazine *Zeitschrift für Innerndekoration*) as 1901.

ones) and by this time the ideas of the English Garden City Movement (often stocked with the Arts and Crafts architectural designs of Parker, Unwin, Ricardo, et al.) had become firmly established.

One more aspect of Olbrich's time in Germany which can be connected to the effects of the English Movement is his participation in the founding of the Deutsche Werkbund (in October, 1907) ten months before his death. Olbrich had, by the inception of the Werkbund, occasion to know Behrens, an early Werkbund luminary. Of course, Olbrich could have known Muthesius himself, at least from the time of his involvement in the Werkbund and, through Muthesius could have learned of Lethaby (or perhaps even met Lethaby) when he stayed in England. More evidence that Muthesius knew Olbrich by sometime in 1907, or at least his work, is the article he wrote in Deutscher Kunst und Dekoration in which Olbrich's work at this exhibition was complimented.⁶⁶

Hoffman

The work of Joseph Hoffman, like that of his fellow Viennese colleague, Olbrich, can be connected to English Arts and Crafts thinking. Hoffman shared a number of common experiences with Olbrich which are germane to a discussion of connections to the English Movement—e.g. contact with Wagner, participation in the Secessionist Movement and membership in the Deustcher Werkbund. There are other connections as well. Wagner's connections with the English Arts and Crafts have already been discussed and in view of the existence of these, some comment on the nature of the contact between Wagner and Hoffman seems worthwhile.

Hoffman studied as Olbrich did at the Viennese Academy of Arts architectural school under Wagner (and earlier, Hasenauer) and won a travel scholarship, also as Olbrich had done. After spending a year in Italy by virtue of his scholarship, Hoffman began working in Wagner's studio (until 1896 or 1897). As previously noted, Wagner had a high regard for Hoffman (e.g., recommending him as his successor in 1904).

⁶⁶ Olbrich, by the time of his death in 1908, had achieved considerable international renown. His work had been shown at important exhibitions in Dresden, Moscow, Turin, and Paris, as well as in St. Louis.

Another connection to the English Arts and Crafts were the discussions, previously mentioned, in which Hoffman participated with other avante-garde architects in Vienna. In 1895, for example, there were those which centered around work shown in issues of the Studio. Hoffman participated in those discussions with Olbrich and others, of the newly arrived issues of the Studio. Hoffman was, as mentioned earlier, a founding member (from 1897) of the Sezession and would thus have come into direct contact at least by the following year with the work of Crane, who, as noted, had exhibited with the Secessionist group.⁶⁷ Another observation relevant to the discussion concerns Hoffman's appointment, two years after the founding of the Sezession, as a professor at the School of Arts and Crafts in Vienna and thus, like Lethaby (and in the same decade) became involved with formally organized arts and crafts educational institutions.

Davey has pointed out that Hoffman's closest links (to the Arts and Crafts in the U.K.) were via Mackintosh.⁶⁸ Mackintosh and Hoffman both had designed rooms for Fritz Warndorfer's house in 1902. Even earlier, in Hoffman's Villa Henneberg (1900) near Vienna, there are similarities to Mackintosh's work.⁶⁹ Mackintosh and Hoffman, at least after the Warndorfer House collaboration, kept in touch by correspondence and soon afterwards (1902 or 1903), Hoffman visited Mackintosh in Glasgow.⁷⁰ Hoffman visited England on the same trip and had visited Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft at Essex House in London. It would have been natural for Hoffman, who continued his work in this period at the School of Arts and Crafts in Vienna, to seek out Lethaby when he visited London. Lethaby was still in charge of the London Central School at the time.

Not long after returning from his trip to the British Isles, in 1903 in fact, Hoffman, with Kolo Moser set up an organization very much in the spirit of the English and Scottish Arts and Crafts organizations—

⁶⁷ Other connections between the Secessionists and English Arts and Crafts work, which would, of course, be relevant in this discussion, have already been noted in the immediately foregoing discussion on Olbrich.

⁶⁸ Op.cit., p. 205.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 202-203.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 205.

an assemblage of studios and workshops known as the Wiener Werkstätte.⁷¹ Perhaps Hoffman's success in establishing the group was a reason for Wagner recommending him the following year as his replacement. A statement by Hoffman and Moser two years later about the Werkstätte's program shows the organization's ties to the English Arts and Crafts. The organization's message was "a welcoming call for those who invoke the name of Ruskin and Morris."⁷² Emphasis was put on the happiness of the worker (which Lethaby also particularly stressed), the living of a noble life, and a refusal to try to compete with cheap (machine-made) products.⁷³

In Hoffman's architectural work, Davey has observed that one of Hoffman's clearest debts to Britain can be found in the Haus Moll (II) of 1904, built in the Hohewarte, a northern suburb of Vienna. Here, the similarity to a house by Voysey in Bedford Park is noted although, in general, Davey argues that Mackintosh is a more pervasive influence on Hoffman's work.⁷⁴ Hoffman's best-known work, the Palais Stoclet in Brussels (1905-1911) shows this influence, Davey notes.⁷⁵

Hoffman's connections to German activities which can be related to the English Arts and Crafts are not as extensive as Olbrich's and he did not move his permanent residence to Germany as the latter had done. He was, however, associated with the Deutscher Werkbund from its early years, and designed the Austrian pavilion for the important 1914 Werkbund exhibition in Cologne.⁷⁶

One final observation on Hoffman might be offered in regard to a concern he shared with Lethaby—a concern with the necessity to make an effort to solve housing problems. Of course, many architects occupied themselves with this question in this period as well as in others. One might note as

⁷¹ The Werkstätte, as originally constituted and as operated independent of government manipulation, lasted until 1933 when it was closed by the National Socialist administration in control of Vienna and then reopened as an entity in harmony with other National Socialist Party activity.

⁷² Quoted from Davey, *op.cit.*, p. 205.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* This was a Werkstätte commission.

⁷⁶ The year that the Deutscher Werkbund was founded, Hoffman was engaged with Gustav Klimt in leading another avant-garde enterprise (in Vienna)—the Secession from the Secession.

evidence of Hoffman's interest, the housing schemes he prepared for the city of Vienna in 1924 and 1925 (he was appointed the city architect in 1920) and his terrace housing solutions of 1932 for the International Werkbundsiedlung (housing estates) built in Vienna that year.

Loos

There also are relationships between the work of another Viennese avant-garde architect, Adolf Loos (who was the same age as Hoffman) and the English Arts and Crafts viewpoint.⁷⁷ Loos had been exposed to the craftsman's viewpoint from an early age. He was the son of a stone mason and he himself had trained in a trade school in this craft and then worked at it. His personal connection to Wagner is much less substantial than that of Olbrich and Hoffman. He had not studied architecture in Vienna as had Olbrich and Hoffman, but in Dresden (1890-1893). But Münz and Künstler, in their study of Loos credit Wagner with being a prime source for Loos' approach to design.⁷⁸ Through an absorption of Wagner's values, Loos could have felt some of the impact of Ruskin although Ruskin and Gottfried Semper, whom Münz and Künstler claim to be Wagner's main sources of inspiration, are also credited with being direct, primary influences for Loos. Geretsegger and Peintner, Wagner's biographers, have related that Loos and Wagner were acquainted. Though Loos is also acknowledged by these authors to have been an admirer of Wagner, a well-developed acquaintanceship does not seem to have taken place. But Loos' familiarity with Wagner must have taken place after he settled in Vienna after his long stay in the United States, which lasted from 1893 until 1896, and will be discussed next.

Loos's stay in the United States seems to have contributed greatly to his very positive attitude about the country. The esteem in which he held America contrasted markedly with his opinion of his native Austria as can be seen in his comments of 1898, for example. While in the United States, Loos visited New York, St. Louis, Chicago and probably, since he had an uncle there (with an American wife),

⁷⁷ The observations made in the following passages about Loos rely mainly on information provided by Ludwig Münz's and Gustav Künstler's Adolf Loos—Pioneer of Modern Architecture, new York: Praeger, 1966 (orig. 1964, Vienna). The book contains an Introduction by Nikolaus Pevsner and an Appreciation by Oskar Koroschka.

⁷⁸ Nikolaus Pevsner, Introduction to Münz's and Künstler's Adolf Loos, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

Philadelphia. At the time of his visit to Chicago, Loos would have been too early to have seen any Prairie School work and the impact of the English Arts and Crafts there must have been at that time fairly slight. But one contribution of Loos, his belief in eliminating ornament from building, can be related to the spare architectural chasses he saw in the Chicago Loop—the products of the Chicago School. One member of the Chicago School, Louis Sullivan, had criticized architectural ornament in its present form in 1892 and had suggested the possibility of refraining from the use of ornament altogether for a while. In Chicago, Loos attended the Columbian Exposition where he would have seen Sullivan's Transportation Building which, perhaps paradoxically, points up the ample architectural ornamentation he sometimes provided. The idea of eliminating ornament Loos would have found very appealing (he later advanced a well-known, similar argument) but, there is doubt as to whether he knew of Sullivan's ideas since they were published in a relatively obscure journal.⁷⁹ Root's unornamented Monadnock Building (1889-91), completed shortly before Loos' arrival in Chicago, however, and similar chaste structures would have been easy for Loos to have seen as well.

The year after Loos returned to Vienna, the Secessionist Movement surfaced. Loos was not a sympathizer. On the issue of ornament, the architectural leaders in the movement, Olbrich and Hoffman, clearly wished a break from the practice of ornamenting buildings in the idioms of the past but they were committed to replacing this ornament with a new, ahistorical type of their own device. This was not acceptable to Loos and he launched a campaign through literary means in favor of the elimination of ornament at a time when the Secession Movement's development was in its earliest stages. Loos took up this crusade later and, in 1908, provided a more powerful manifestation of this—his well-known tract "Ornament and Crime." Lethaby's attitude was more similar to that of Hoffman and Olbrich—i.e., that ornament was still needed in architecture—although he would probably not have been supportive of the particular type of ornament they offered as a solution. Lethaby must have found Secessionist ornament "arbitrary" although he could have supported the restraint shown in not ornamenting everything possible.

⁷⁹ Pevsner, for example, in his Introduction to Münz's and Künstler's book on Loos (*op.cit.*) did not think so (p. 20).

Loos' work also shows this direction although here restraint becomes complete abstinence. As early as 1893 (in Leadwork) Lethaby had suggested (as already noted) that the wrong kind of ornamentation was worse than none at all and one can find his criticisms of current practice in regard to architectural ornament in other relatively early writing—1905, for example. In 1911 the idea that architecture could stand alone, legitimately, without ornament reached a wider audience than in 1892, with expression of this thought in Lethaby's popular Architecture.

Also related to the effect of the English Arts and Crafts on Loos, it should be pointed out (as it was in the Introduction by Pevsner to Münz and Künstler's book) that Loos was very positive about the English (as well as the Americans) in general. This did not come apparently, as was the case with the United States, from personal knowledge and his opposition to the clearly British-influenced Secessionist Movement is belied. But for Loos, Pevsner reported, "the English could do no wrong."⁸⁰ This pro-English attitude on Loos' part is evident by at least 1897. Loos, throughout his writing, made such comments (referring to the activity of designing, as relevant to the crafts and especially furniture design) as: "all the world ... has moved forward courageously under English leadership."⁸¹ Loos confessed to admiring the Greeks and the English, he said, were like them. London was, he surmised, the center of civilization. Loos' admonition that one should not draw, but make "as is the English principle," Pevsner observed (quoting Loos), can easily be connected to Lethaby, who had by that time been stressing such a point of view at the London Central School.⁸²

In some positive remarks about England which were less in tune with Arts and Crafts philosophy Loos praised the machine-made products of England (and English engineering). Lethaby would not himself arrive at a positive point of view about even the possibility of good work done by machines for a number of years but he would have been pleased to know of Loos' appreciation that "England was the

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 17-18.

first country to battle against imitations.”⁸³ Lethaby had been saying this from his earliest writings (and his mentor, Ruskin, of course, from long before). Loos usually followed Ruskin and Morris, the initial guiding lights of Arts and Crafts ideology, Pevsner has noted, in regard to the desirability of seeking after “truth” and “simplicity” in architecture, but did not always follow them (as noted) in their opposition to machine work as opposed to that done by hand.

Loos’ built works, although transcending English Arts and Crafts work in its restraint in ornament and showing in some cases, a much more purely geometric approach to the presentation of architectural form, nevertheless are sometimes very close in interior treatment to what was aimed for in the English Movement. Evidence of this is provided in the interior of the Leopold Langer flat (1901) in Vienna and later, in the interiors—especially that of the dining room—of the Steiner House (1910). Also, a sketch by Loos from 1899 shows a clear affinity to the English Arts and Crafts approach. All of the interiors mentioned are simple in appearance but do not exhibit the uncompromising bareness on the exterior as those of his Steiner and Scheu houses. The use in Loos’ interiors of “warm” materials (like wood finished to enhance its natural appearance) can be compared with contemporary works of the English Movement. Neutra, in the Forward to Geretsegger and Peintner’s work on Wagner even referred to Loos as using an “arts and crafts” approach, although this is joined to a less neutral, seemingly more patronizing characterization of Loos, as one “who continued to work in the Chippendale tradition.”⁸⁴

Two additional points might be made in the context of a discussion of Loos’ connections to English Arts and Crafts work, or rather, specifically to Lethaby’s perspective. One involved the pursuit of novelty (for its own sake) in design. Both Loos and Lethaby were against it. The second relates to Lethaby’s concern (it has already been acknowledged in this discussion, to also be one for Wagner, Olbrich, and Hoffman) for finding broad solutions to the problems of housing. Münz and Künstler note that, especially

⁸³ Loos, as quoted in Pevsner’s Introduction to Münz’s and Künstler’s *Adolf Loos*, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-18. (Orig. date of quote not given.)

⁸⁴ *Op.cit.*, no page.

in the years following the First World War (that is, circa 1920-23), Loos also devoted his attention to such problems, as shown in his designs for housing estates from these years.

Schindler

Another Austrian architect, Rudolf Schindler, was exposed to several schools of thought which either bore the imprint of the English Arts and Crafts Movement or shared values with it.⁸⁵ It is not possible to say much about the direct impact on Schindler of English Arts and Crafts theory, as articulated by Lethaby and others, but there were some notable secondary sources of that point of view which influenced Schindler's architecture. Also, some of Schindler's interests can be related to some of Lethaby's which do not grow out of the Arts and Crafts viewpoint. Schindler did possess some direct knowledge of English Arts and Crafts activity via magazines but the principal sources which either conveyed to Schindler the values of the English Arts and Crafts or similar ones from another provenance were Wagner and Loos in Vienna, and Wright, and Gill to a lesser extent, in the United States. Also, some of the characteristics of Schindler's work which reflect Arts and Crafts thinking or Lethaby's own viewpoint (or both) are evident in other work with which Schindler was familiar—work done by contemporary or earlier architects in California and in Europe, and some in Germany and Holland.

The qualities of Schindler's work which were shared by the English Arts and Crafts included: a) the sparing use of architectural ornamentation (and the rejection, for the most part, of ornamental vocabularies derived from past styles; b) the commitment to thorough control of all of a project's architectural and ancillary work; c) an attitude which entailed considering the architectural product as a custom-made entity rather than a product of mass-production; and d) an interest in ensuring that, through the choice of materials, forms, et cetera. that a building would fit into its local context. Parallel to aspects of Lethaby's thinking not usually associated with the orthodox Arts and Crafts position are the following other attributes of Schindler's work: a) an interest in mass-housing problems; b) an interest in the

⁸⁵ Much of the following commentary on Schindler is developed from information in Esther McCoy's *Five California Architects*. (op.cit.) and David Gebhard's monograph, *Schindler*, 1973, The Viking Press, N.Y. (orig. publ. 1971).

application of science (through engineering and technology) to architecture; and c) the acceptance of the newer building materials such as concrete and iron.

Younger than the Austrian architects discussed so far in this Appendix, Schindler was nevertheless in Vienna when Wagner, Hoffman and Loos were still active. Schindler was about twenty-one in 1908 when Olbrich, who had not been a part of the Viennese milieu for a number of years, died. In 1911, when Schindler earned his degree in engineering in Vienna, Hoffman was still the leader of the Wiener Werkstätte and Loos, the year before, had just built his well-known Steiner House in the same city. Schindler had been working a year for Wagner at this point (and would work for him again in 1912-13).

David Gebhard has reported that the work of people associated with English Arts and Crafts Movement architects such as Mackintosh, Voysey and Baillie-Scott were known to Schindler as a student in Vienna and that an appreciation of the significance of Mackintosh, at least, was retained by Schindler a long while since, in 1934 (at age forty-seven approximately), he wrote that this Scot, along with Wright and Sullivan, had provided the beginning of modern architecture.⁸⁶ Gebhard also claimed that the influence of Wagner (whose links to English Arts and Crafts theory have already been discussed) on Schindler was strong, even though the effect on Schindler of the younger Austrian architect, Loos, was more lasting.⁸⁷ Gebhard has noted that in the years Schindler was studying architecture at the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts (from 1910, the year before completing his studies in engineering at the Viennese Imperial Institute), Loos was “admired and imitated” by the school’s students, although Loos had no position at the academy.⁸⁸ Both Loos and the English Arts and Crafts architects tended (more extremely in Loos’ case) to pare away ornament in their architectural designs. Loos’ own polemic on the subject from 1908 was a major component of Schindler’s theory, Gebhard has noted, even at the time Schindler left for

⁸⁶ Gebhard, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 19. Some of the basic aspects of Wagner’s theory that are similar to Lethaby’s; such as a functionalist outlook, continued to be an important aspect of Schindler’s work even after he had become established on his own in California. Loos’ own connections to the English Arts and Crafts have already been discussed.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

the United States (1914). However, Schindler's dedication toward the removal of ornament did not have the passionate quality of Loos' even though, in practice, the removal of ornamentation was essentially taken as far.⁸⁹ Schindler's student projects in Vienna show his interest in stripping off ornament (but leaving, as was the method of his other mentor, Wagner, a perceivable residual classicism.⁹⁰ Also, in Schindler's projects is shown his interest in utilizing new materials and giving them frank expression. For example, there is his design for a hunting lodge (1912) which he proposed to build employing exposed steel beams (but used in a vertical position) and reinforced concrete. The chapel in the complex developed in his 1912-13 thesis project was to have a roof of steel beams and reinforced concrete fully exposed when viewed from below. Lethaby at this point in time was also clearly accepting of these newer materials for building.

After further academic studies in Vienna, graduating again in 1914, Schindler left for the United States (the same year), having received a job offer there. After moving to the United States, however, Schindler fell under the influence of Wright and also felt the effect of contemporary and earlier twentieth century architectural work done in southern California. Wright and his circle and the early modern California architects had likewise drawn, at lesser or greater remove, from the English Arts and Crafts. But Schindler, before emigrating to the United States, already knew about recent developments in American architecture, as did his fellow architectural students, via Loos, who provided Schindler with his own idealized view of the United States.⁹¹

An important part of Schindler's pre-emigrant knowledge of recent American architecture was what he knew of Wright's work. Gebhard has observed that by 1912 the Wasmuth Edition (1910) showcasing Wright's designs at that time had been seen all over the Continent and that Wright's *oeuvre*, therein

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 19. Schindler intended to return to Vienna after his trip to the United States and work for Loos who had, in fact, encouraged him to answer the Chicago employment advertisement which brought him to the United States in the first place (see p. 21, Gebhard).

⁹⁰ See, for example, Schindler's "Hotel Rong" project of 1912 or his thesis project of 1912-13.

⁹¹ Gebhard, op.cit., p. 12.

expressed in his Prairie School idiom, had a large impact on Schindler.⁹² Gebhard has noted that such work, which shows, as previously noted, many links to the English arts and crafts, was of prime importance in the formation of Schindler's architectural outlook, at the time he left for the United States.⁹³

In Chicago, Schindler took up the position he was promised in the firm whose chief partner, Henry A. Ottenheimer, had been a draftsman under Sullivan.⁹⁴ Chicago certainly was the place for Schindler to indulge his interest in the technological side of architecture and Lethaby, no doubt, would have applauded Schindler's earnest interest in matters relating to structure and heating and lighting.⁹⁵ Schindler's enthusiasm for Wright explains his repeated requests for employment in that architect's office. Wright finally said yes in 1917, partially because he considered Schindler's engineering background an asset in completing the working drawings for his Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. Some of Schindler's designs from the time spent in Chicago prior to joining Wright show a similarity in approach to that of the Prairie School and thus, also can be connected more obviously than some of Schindler's later work to that of the English Movement. This included his design for a Women's Club from 1916 and his "Log House" (1916-17), a summer vacation house. Also, his project for a Jewish Temple and School (1915-16) shows an absence of ornamentation which can be related both to Loos and to the tendencies of Arts and Crafts architecture. A later design by Schindler (in 1922), the first design for Wright's C.P. Lowes House at Eagle Rock, California, is also very much in the Prairie School spirit.

Schindler was with Wright when the latter moved his office staff to Taliesin near Spring Green, Wisconsin, in 1918 and was still working for Wright in 1920 when he was sent to Los Angeles to supervise the construction of Wright's Barnsdall House, one of Wright's more interesting expressions in

⁹² Ibid., p. 13.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁹⁴ Schindler also knew Sullivan from his days in Chicago and was still in touch, at least until 1912.

⁹⁵ Gebhard, op.cit., p. 23. Another technological interest of Schindler's during his Chicago days was elevators.

concrete.⁹⁶ About a year later (circa 1921), Schindler set up on his own in California. He continued to pursue an interest (partly traceable to Wright's influence) in utilizing concrete and to show a willingness to experiment with various materials. During 1920, 1921 and 1922 (even as late as 1923) Schindler continued to perform some work for Wright. Demonstrating the kind of interest in building technologies (shown also by Frank Lloyd Wright and his sons) of which Lethaby would have approved, Schindler, with the help of Frank's son, Lloyd Wright, produced the working drawings for the first of Wright's pre-cast concrete block houses, the Millard House (1922-23) in Pasadena.⁹⁷

Schindler's later architectural activity in California also shows some affinity to Lethaby's theories. These come not only via the personal influence of Wright and, further removed in time, from Wagner and Loos and from publications covering English avant-garde activity, but also from Schindler's contact with California architects (especially Irving Gill) and the architectural expressions indigenous to, or at least those which had become popular in that area of the United States. Even before coming to the United States, Schindler had been exposed (mainly between 1900 and 1913) to California architecture through illustrations in European books and magazines. This architecture would have included, Gebhard has noted, The California Mission Revival style—a style which, in a way, captured the flavor of California's architectural heritage (Spanish) the way the English Arts and Crafts expressed England's.

Schindler's personal acquaintance with the architectural forms of California began earlier than when he travelled there as Wright's employee in 1920. He had undertaken a long train trip in late summer, 1915, to California (and to New Mexico and Arizona). One can see in his 1915 project for the Martin House in Taos, New Mexico (a design related to this trip) that Schindler, like Lethaby and other English Arts and Craft architects, endeavored to use indigenous forms and building materials to tie a building to its locale. In the Martin design the designated material was not reinforced concrete like the previously mentioned student project in Vienna, but the traditional adobe of the Southwest. Of course,

⁹⁶ Wright's son Lloyd had joined his father's staff in 1919 and was also in Los Angeles with Schindler the next year to work on the Barnsdall House.

⁹⁷ Schindler's severance from Wright during the early twenties was gradual, Gebhard has observed (p. 45).

this interest in expressing an indigenous aspect in his architectural work Schindler derived most clearly from Wright, of whom Schindler wrote later, in 1934: “He tried to weave his buildings into the character of the locality...”⁹⁸ Also, on his 1915 trip to the southwest United States, Schindler made note of a number of Mission Revival style buildings as well as some of the San Diego homes designed by Gill. Gebhard has noted that there is no indication of Schindler’s interest in such California architectural phenomena that was, perhaps, closer to the English Arts and Crafts idiom than that of Gill such as that produced by the Greene Brothers or Maybeck and the builders of the California bungalow.⁹⁹

Gill, whose connections to the Arts and Crafts have already been discussed, could have provided Schindler with some of his inspiration to be technologically innovative in architecture, a requirement Lethaby called for, especially in his later writings. In Gill too, Schindler could have found a proximate kindred soul in the pursuit of the “spare” approach to architectural ornament, although he was probably already convinced by virtue of his earlier contacts with Loos. Other non-Californian sources of inspiration for Schindler such as Wright and the English Arts and Crafts architects did not aim at the expulsion of ornament from architecture and there is nothing to indicate that Schindler was not closer to this point of view than to Gill’s and Loos’.

Although Schindler had seen Gill’s work in 1915, it was really Lloyd Wright who, having worked in Gill’s office in San Diego, provided Schindler (and also Richard Neutra) with a more thorough acquaintance with Gill’s architecture. Schindler has also visited Gill in the early 1920s and Gebhard has reported that afterward, Schindler was quick to take up Gill’s methods of using concrete, especially Gill’s tilt-slab method. In Schindler’s first independent California work of technological note, his own home on King’s Road (1921-22), he used concrete tilt-slab walls inspired by Gill.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ “Space Architecture,” 1934 (quoted from Gebhard’s book on Schindler, op.cit., p. 194.

⁹⁹ Gebhard, op.cit., p. 31. Gebhard characterized Maybeck and the Greene brothers as West Coast clearly as exponents of the arts and crafts (p. 51).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 51. It was, interestingly, built across the street from one of Gill’s most acclaimed works, the Dodge House.

A number of Schindler's designs following shortly after the building of his own house show the kind of technological innovation which would respond to Lethaby's calls in the second and third decades of the twentieth century for the intensified application of science to architecture. Schindler's masterpiece, the Lovell Beach House (Newport Beach, California, 1922-26), with its gigantic concrete frame supports and walls of metal lathe and cement plaster is one such example. Also noteworthy in this respect was his Packard House (1924) in South Pasadena, California—his first experiment with gunite concrete. The walls there were composed of two separate layers of mesh tied to vertical reinforcement rods and all of this encapsulated in gunite concrete. There are also Schindler's court apartments, built in 1923 in La Jolla, using lift-form construction. Another kind of innovation and construction is demonstrated by a contemporary work by Schindler—the Laura Davies House (Los Angeles, circa 1922-24), one of the first A-frame structures in the United States. Also from the 1920s might be mentioned the project for a house for Aline Barnsdall (to be built in Palos Verdes) which was to have had a translucent roof. From the 1930s came other technological innovations by Schindler—his pre-fab metal house at Altadena of 1935 and, promoting the recently viable-use of plywood as a building material, his plywood model house of 1936.¹⁰¹ Thus, in California Schindler followed in the tradition of Wagner and the Viennese School, Wright and the other Prairie School architects, and Lethaby himself in his attempts at constructional experimentation and the utilization of concrete in architecture. Schindler's work generally, Gebhard has written, was "experimental" and "advanced" for the time and for the region of the country in which it was built.¹⁰²

Schindler, like Lethaby and other twentieth century architects who are associated with the Modern Movement believed that the use of historical styles in contemporary practice was to be avoided. He wrote in 1912 (from A Manifesto) that "the styles are dead."¹⁰³ Gebhard has expressed his belief that Schindler was cool to Gill's "style" (although not to his building procedures) even though it was so similar to that of

¹⁰¹By 1940, Schindler had made plywood one of his principal materials.

¹⁰²Gebhard, op.cit., p. 51.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, p. 191.

his mentor, Loos, because it was too “Missionary” or “Spanish Revival.” This fault could have manifested itself, in Schindler’s view, in the arch forms and tile roofs Gill sometimes used.¹⁰⁴

In the next decade, however, Schindler’s California work sometimes shows itself to be of the “style” that was locally popular at that time. Because the stylistic characteristics he employed were those popular in a particular area and drew on the traditional artistic roots of the region, Schindler would at least have satisfied, to some extent, the Arts and Crafts desire that local modes of architectural expression be adopted. On the other hand, perhaps Schindler’s “Missionary” (Mission Style) and “Spanish Colonial Revival” works could be considered in violation of the Arts and Crafts injunction against the use of past styles.¹⁰⁵

Gebhard has noted that Schindler, especially in his later years, wanted to be intimately involved in a building’s construction. As years went on, Schindler’s working drawings became more and more cursory, Gebhard has reported—the minimum required by building regulations. This approach left Schindler more

¹⁰⁴Ibid, p. 68.

¹⁰⁵Gebhard has noted that by 1930, Schindler borrowed quite a bit from the Mission Style and the Spanish Colonial Revival Style (Gebhard, op.cit., p. 46). What ties some of Schindler’s work to these idioms is the liberal use of stucco, and such stylistic elements as shed roofs and the use of tile for flooring and as a roofing material. Also, Gebhard believes that Schindler’s own house in Hollywood (1921-22), the Popenoe Cabin (worked on in 1922 and 1924) at Coachella, and the Pueblo Ribero Court (1923) in La Jolla could reasonably be called Pueblo Revival—a stylistic expression which reflects another indigenous Southwest tradition, though not one native to California itself (Gebhard, op.cit., p. 48). Schindler’s Pueblo Revival works drew in their appearance from the Pueblo Indian villages of New Mexico which Schindler must have seen, at least on his 1915 trip through that state.

In Gebhard’s estimation, in at least one instance, Schindler’s involvement with a revival expression popular in the Southwest was of a satirical nature (Gebhard, op.cit., p. 131). This involved the house he built in 1931 for Hans von Koerber in a community in which all the residences uniformly presented themselves in the Spanish Colonial Revival idiom. Schindler used tile to make the building fit in perhaps, for the overall geometry was much closer to that of the de Stijl Movement and, Gebhard has said that the interior spaces are too rich (complicated) to be consistent with the spatial character of the Spanish Colonial Revival (Gebhard, op.cit., p. 131). Liberties taken in the application of the tile include allowing the material to “overflow” the roof surfaces (onto the adjacent wall planes) and laying them wrong end up around the fireplace hearth inside. One other response to West Coast styles by Schindler relates to what Gebhard has called the “woodsy” buildings of the San Francisco Bay area. Schindler’s small beach house (1936-38) for Olga Zaczek at Playa del Rey appears to be an attempt to supply work in the Bay Area idiom and, as with some of Schindler’s other work seeming to speak to certain stylistic currents, Lethaby and other English Arts and Crafts architects might have respected the attempt to produce a localized expression.

free to improvise and make design decisions on the site.¹⁰⁶ Gebhard has called this attitude “an inheritance from the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts Movement,” and has noted also that, like the Arts and Crafts architects (and later Prairie School and International Style architects who followed the Arts and Crafts position on this point), Schindler was fond of “built-in” items.¹⁰⁷

As with Lethaby and other English Arts and Crafts architects, Schindler was interested in furniture design. Schindler obtained some commissions of this type, as in the case of the work for H. Warren in 1937 (in Hollywood Hills) and for Chayes the year before in Los Angeles.¹⁰⁸ In his later work, then, in his interest in architecture as a custom-built undertaking over which he had total control, even to the smallest design elements, Schindler approached closely to the Arts and Crafts ideal.

Like Lethaby at least, as well as some other prominent English Arts and Crafts architects, Schindler had an interest in the problems of mass housing. Examples of this sort in Schindler’s *oeuvre* include the Pueblo Ribera Court (previously mentioned) which Gebhard has called “one of the most original multiple housing designs of the period,” the concrete houses (which have similarities to Gill’s work) for a workmen’s colony (1924) built for Gould and Bandini, and the housing project (1924-25) for J. Harriman—this last a larger scale version of Pueblo Ribera, probably to be built in Los Angeles.¹⁰⁹

Finally, one more connection can be made between Schindler’s works and Arts and Crafts—related sources—in this case, American ones. This concerns Schindler’s subscription to the romantic desire to enjoy the out-of-doors as much as possible, an ideal still heartily pursued by Southern Californians. This

¹⁰⁶Gebhard, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁸Of course, a number of architects of the Modern Movement who preceded Schindler (e.g., Wright), contemporaries (like Mies van der Rohe) and those who came later (like Marcel Breuer) also were very noteworthy in the attention they gave to furniture design but all probably shared a common, albeit distant source of inspiration in this regard, although it was probably not the only one—the arts and crafts’.

¹⁰⁹Gebhard, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

can be connected, Gebhard has noted, to the enthusiastic emphasis Gustav Stickley and Elbert Hubbard placed on this.¹¹⁰

In addition to inspiration obtained in various ways from sources such as Wright, Gill, and West Coast styles, after Schindler came to the United States, he was also quite aware during the American period of this life of what was going on in avant-garde architectural circles in Europe. Among his cuttings from European magazines of the 1920s can be found information about the work of Van Doesburg, Oud, Rietveld, Le Corbusier, Gropius and Mendelsohn. Some indirect links to the English Arts and Crafts can also be established in the case of these Dutch, German, and (in Le Corbusier's case) Swiss designers, and this will be commented upon in more detail shortly.¹¹¹

Neutra

One additional prominent architect of Austrian origin who, like Schindler, achieved prominence in southern California in the first half of the twentieth century should be mentioned in the context of a discussion of the influence of the English Arts and Crafts. This is Richard Neutra. Five years younger than Schindler, Neutra experienced some of the same stimuli as Schindler including some of Arts and Crafts provenance except that these influences were, compared to their impact on Schindler, a little more faint, a little more removed by virtue of the passage of time, and a little more indirect. Because of this situation, the connections that can be made between Neutra and the Arts and Crafts can appropriately be treated more briefly. The three main points to be made concern, first, Neutra's ability to achieve an architectural expression for his buildings which, although in the International Style idiom, respond to the particularity of the site. This was a concern of the Arts and Crafts further developed by Wright with, in Neutra's case, the influence of the latter and his own experiences in Switzerland working with a landscape gardener in 1917 probably being the most important. The second point concerns the sparseness

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 48-51.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 77. Some of Schindler's best work from the 1920s Gebhard has noted as being particularly close to (and could loosely even be labeled) de Stijl, especially related to that work produced by Van Doesburg (although Gebhard also has mentioned Rietveld and Stam in this context).

of, actually absence of, architectural ornamentation in the traditional sense in Neutra's work, partly due to the influence of Wagner, Loos, Schindler and Gill. The third point concerns Neutra's interest in technological innovation in architecture, which, though not a hallmark of the Arts and Crafts approach, was consistent with the advice Lethaby provided in his later career (although the influence of Wright, Gill and Schindler can all also be suggested here).¹¹²

The associations of Wagner and Loos with the English Arts and Crafts (already discussed) are of relevance in discussing the influence of the English Movement on Neutra. As a youth in Vienna, Neutra admired the works of Wagner although he did not study with him. But Neutra later wrote that, as was also the case with Loos (whom he knew from 1910 when he was about eighteen), Wagner was an influence on him through his life.¹¹³ One other European architect with some Arts and Crafts connections who had an impact on Neutra was the German architect Eric Mendelsohn whose acquaintance he had made by 1921. As a young man, Neutra had also become acquainted with Wright's work which he could have studied in concentrated (published) form from 1910 with the Wasmuth publication in Europe then of Wright's work.

Wright's Arts and Crafts legacy has already been noted and no doubt Neutra was made familiar with some part of this, along with some of Wright's other ideas, during his stay with Wright in Wisconsin in 1925.¹¹⁴ That year also, Neutra moved to Los Angeles where he lived for several years at Schindler's house. He set up his first independent office there. Through these circumstances Neutra had close access to Schindler's thinking, some of which obtained from an Arts and Crafts base. Principally through Frank Lloyd Wright's architect son, Lloyd, Neutra became acquainted also with Gill's work in California and

¹¹²Another similarity to Lethaby, regarding an "extrinsic" approach to architecture, was mentioned earlier in this Appendix.

¹¹³Neutra's Forward to Geretsegger and Peintner's biography of Wagner ([op.cit.](#)).

¹¹⁴In 1923, almost a decade after Schindler's and a little in advance of Mendelsohn's first American visit, Neutra came to the United States. After first staying in New York, he travelled to Chicago where he met Sullivan late in 1923. Sullivan had not long to live then and the following April, at Sullivan's funeral, he met Wright. That year he would have had an opportunity to absorb some of Chicago's technological lessons in building, as had Schindler earlier. This could have come partially through his employment in 1924 in the offices of the venerable Chicago School firm of Holabird and Root. The next year, however, Neutra was in Spring Green, Wisconsin, working for a time with Wright.

the latter's eschewal, in harmony with later Arts and Crafts tendencies, of architectural ornament. Gill's technological innovations must have provided Neutra with another proximate source of inspiration (added to that of Schindler) for similar developments in his own California work. Neutra and Schindler engaged in a number of collaborative efforts from 1925 until 1931, including a joint submission for the League of Nations competition in 1926. Neutra, like Schindler Gebhard has noted, tried his hand at one or two exercises in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. In terms of relevance to Arts and Crafts theory, the same observations can be made about this that were made earlier in this discussion regarding Schindler—the violation of Lethaby's prohibition of a style-based architectural expression but the compliance with his theory in the sense that the Spanish Colonial represented to some extent, a local architectural tradition.

Neutra's acceptance of new materials of construction, which Lethaby also came to promote, is shown in his use of reinforced concrete for the Jardinette Apartments (1927) in Los Angeles. His Lovell House (designed the next year and built in 1929) in Los Angeles was, of course, a landmark in technological innovation in house design with its suspended elements, bar-joist construction, sprayed-on gunite concrete and industrial steel casement windows. Neutra showed also that, like Lethaby, he had an interest in concerns of a wider scope pertaining to the built environment than individual buildings; his extended urban study, "Rush City Reformed" (1923-30) shows this. Before leaving a discussion of the Viennese connections to English Arts and Crafts theory, one should mention another of Wagner's students, Jan Kotèra (1871-1923) who later founded the Czechoslovakian arts and crafts association.

Germany

Leaving aside temporarily, comments on the activities of Muthesius, upon which much of the following discussion of the influence of English Arts and Crafts theory on German architecture relies, one might begin by noting that there arose in Germany a native arts and crafts movement which, although generated out of indigenous sources, was affected not only by the English Arts and Crafts via Muthesius but also by that phenomenon independent of Muthesius' connections to it. It can be noted that the prominent Prussian architect, Heinrich Tessenow was already, around 1905, executing designs for villas

and cottages in an arts and crafts idiom which drew on indigenous north German building traditions. And, as noted earlier, the works of Voysey, Ashbee, Baillie-Scott and Mackintosh were being illustrated in German language magazines contemporaneously with and earlier than Muthesius' influential volumes treating recent English architecture. In May 1897, a German publication was begun modeled closely after that important publishing vehicle for the English Arts and Crafts, the Studio. This was the magazine, Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration, published by the anglophile Alexander Koch.

Koch also figures into the early arts and crafts activities at Darmstadt. He had sent a memo to Ernst Ludwig (the Grand Duke of Hesse and patron of the art colony at Darmstadt) at the close of the 1898 Darmstadt exhibition—an enterprise in which he had played a leading role. The memo, citing examples in England (as well as Belgium, Holland and France) to be used as inspiration, advised that Darmstadt could be a center of activity in the applied arts. As noted earlier, Ernst Ludwig, grandson of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, was an anglophile himself—in frequent touch with events in Britain at least, through the exchange of visits with his famous grandparents. In the mid-1890s Ludwig had given the job of designing the Ducal Museum at Darmstadt to Alfred Messel, an architect Lethaby admired, probably because of some qualities held in common (as noted earlier) with his own approach to architecture. As mentioned, some first-hand contact with British Arts and Crafts design had already taken place at Darmstadt, some through Baillie-Scott's and Ashbee's work there in 1897-98, in which they designed the interiors of the Ducal place. Baillie-Scott, a bit later, won first prize in the competition sponsored by the Darmstadt art colony's magazine, Zeitschrift für Innerdecoration, for a "House for an Art Lover." The Scottish Arts and Crafts adherent, Mackintosh, it should be noted, also entered the contest but did not provide a complete set of drawings.

Mention of other German activity influenced by the English Arts and Crafts and Britain generally (and thus indirectly by Lethaby as one of the Movement's leaders) should include that of Karl Schmidt (1873-1948), a friend of Friedrich Naumann (the German politician and supporter of the Werkbund who saw to the publication, in German, of Lethaby's essay "Design in Industry.") In 1898 Schmidt started up at Hellerau, an art colony near Dresden, a furniture workshop (the Werkstätte für Handwerkskunst, also

known as the Deutscher Werkstätten). This undertaking was influenced by the English Arts and Crafts principles Schmidt had been able to observe first-hand when he travelled to England as a journeyman cabinet maker. Davey has noted that Schmidt's organization was intended to be more of a business like Morris' firm in England rather than like Ashbee's organization or like other Werkstätte-type groups coming into being on the Continent during the period, which were guided more by altruistic motivations.¹¹⁵ Hoffman and Baillie-Scott worked occasionally for Schmidt's organization and people from the Münchner Werkstätte (which Behrens was a member of by 1899) also joined Schmidt's circle. By the end of the nineteenth century, there had appeared in this organization some change of emphasis (related to the issue of producing goods economically by machine) which was at odds with the Arts and Crafts point of view, but Banham has noted that later (1903) Schmidt still spoke "from within the Arts and Crafts tradition."¹¹⁶ By 1906, however, a shifting away from this perspective had, as in the case of the Deutscher Werkbund later, definitely occurred.¹¹⁷ In that year (with Bruno Paul as one of the designers of note) the Deutscher Werkstätte had begun to develop furniture suitable to the processes of mass production.

One other the German organization might be mentioned related to the present discussion, the Berlin School of Arts and Crafts. The Berlin institution had been one of several, where, around the beginning of the twentieth century the crafts instruction was being merged with that in the fine arts in the manner of Lethaby's London Central School. Weimar has already been mentioned as another example of this and this was also the case at Karlsruhe and Dusseldorf. In 1907, the same year that the Deutscher Werkbund was founded, the Berlin School secured Bruno Paul (whom Pevsner described as a "progressive") as principal.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵Davey, *op.cit.*, p. 205

¹¹⁶Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, 1970, p. 71. (Orig. 1960.)

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸Pevsner, *Pioneers....*, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

Muthesius

The fusions of German art academies with craft institutions reflected the direct influence of the London experiment with its Central School, the one in which Lethaby played a leading role, but it has not been possible in this study to document Lethaby's specific contribution in the case of the German schools. As a leader of the English Arts and Crafts Movement however, he no doubt met other Germans besides Muthesius who were interested in the approach being taken in England. Perhaps, for example, he met Karl Schmidt when the latter visited England. That he knew Muthesius is certain, and it is Muthesius who most directly brought to bear on contemporary German work his knowledge of and opinions about the activities of the English Movement.¹¹⁹ As noted earlier (Chapter XIV) Muthesius resided in London for six years (beginning in 1896) as a trade attaché to the German Embassy. In this capacity Muthesius reported on English activity of interest, including information about residential and church architecture and also about English teaching methods relating to the arts (including the subject of evening classes).

Based on information gathered during his times in England, Muthesius authored a number of publications in German which either focused on or at least included information about English architecture, as well as his opinions about the foregoing. Some of these opinions have been discussed already in the chapter on Nationalism and Internationalism (Chapter XIV). One that has not yet been brought up however, concerns the similarity of Muthesius' and Lethaby's convictions about not using the styles of the past in present-day architecture. Banham, in fact, has described Muthesius' words from 1902 on the subject (in *Stilarchitektur und Baukunst*) as an "orthodox Lethabitic diatribe against the 'catalog styles,'" except for Muthesius' show of interest in Schinkel and neo-classicism, which Banham called "un-Lethabitic."¹²⁰ Muthesius' concern about the style-copying question continued later, as it did for Lethaby; Muthesius' speech in 1911 to the Deutscher Werkbund, the organization for which he served as

¹¹⁹Another, personal connection between Britain and Germany: Machintosh acted as god-parent to Muthesius' son.

¹²⁰Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 72. Lethaby had criticized the copying of older styles in present architecture since at least 1892 (as in his essay contributed then to the book edited by Shaw and Jackson *Architecture a Profession or an Art?*, *op.cit.*).

one of the principal (and founding) members, addressed a wider but related issue in criticism of the instability and changeability of taste in his time. Lethaby referred, the same year, in Architecture, to the various efforts in the recent past to recreate one kind of older architectural style or another and in 1917 (in a speech focusing on German architecture incidentally) also referred to the continuing cycles of style-copying.

The policies of the Werkbund, however, differed on some issues from Lethaby's thinking—principally on the question about the role that the machine was to play in art. By viewing the machine as an extension of the hand tool, the Werkbund came to terms with the machine. Orthodox Arts and Crafts theory never made this accommodation although Lethaby himself, as explained earlier, eventually did. Muthesius' argument for increasing the quality of industrial products (an argument dating at least from the Werkbund's founding) rested primarily on economic considerations, including a commitment to maintaining current levels of German exports. Muthesius, at the Werkbund Congresses of 1911 and 1914, put increased emphasis on standardization, drawing, however, the opposition of other prominent Werkbund figures like Van de Velde. Lethaby, although there is clear evidence of his acceptance of the machine by 1914 (and we know of his support, immediately following, for an English version of the Werkbund, the D.I.A), did not make clear, positive comments about standardization until the 1920s—1923, for example. Standardization was an important theme in the Werkbund's exhibition Stuttgart in 1927 (the year of Muthesius' death) and also in the German exhibition under the charge of the Werkbund at the 1930 World's Fair in Paris.¹²¹ Despite these later developments, however, the initial seeds of the Werkbund's contribution to art and architecture were provided by the English Arts and Crafts Movement.

Another way in which the English Arts and Crafts Movement's influence (and Lethaby's) was felt in Germany through Muthesius, besides that conducted through the Werkbund concerns the educational process. In 1907, Muthesius, as head of the Prussian Board of Trade for Schools of Arts and Crafts, took significant action to reform the schools under his jurisdiction. Lethaby's London Central School of Arts

¹²¹Prefabrication was also a theme for this exhibit.

and Crafts was the principal inspiration for these reforms. The architects Muthesius appointed to key academic positions to carry out these reforms included such important personalities in twentieth century German architecture as Peter Behrens and Hans Poelzig. The involvement of these last mentioned, with the schools at Düsseldorf and Breslau (Wroelaw) respectively, will be commented on in more detail shortly. In Muthesius' own architectural work, the influence of the English Arts and Crafts is apparent, although Davey has described it as an uneasy blend of English and German expression.¹²² Davey noted, for example, the similarity of Muthesius' mansions (1907-08) at Nikolasee (in Berlin) to the "butterfly" house by Prior (one of Lethaby's closer associates in the English Movement) but with a north German treatment of the external wooden elements and a high tile roof.¹²³ The plan, however, Davey observed, is not like the more loosely arranged and extended spaces of English Arts and Crafts work but rather much more compact.¹²⁴

Behrens (and Poelzig)

Peter Behrens, who was seven years younger than Muthesius, also can be connected to English Arts and Crafts theory and to the particular outlook of Lethaby with whom, on the basis of reasonable evidence one can suggest that he had direct contact. The links that can be made between Behrens and the English Arts and Crafts partially depend upon Behrens' association with Muthesius, but there are other avenues to consider as well. The presence of English Arts and Crafts architects like Baillie-Scott and Ashbee in Germany in the 1890s and the coverage of the work of such architects in this period in German periodicals (and English ones available in Germany) has already been noted. Behren's (then in his twenties) could easily have been exposed to these personalities and to this information. He may have, in

¹²²Davey, op.cit., p. 202.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

fact been inspired by this. Alan Windsor, in his biography of Behrens, has described Behrens as a leading participant in the (German) Arts and Crafts Movement (as well as in the propagation of Art Nouveau).¹²⁵

Philip Johnson also claimed a connection between Behrens and the English Movement. In describing the state of German architecture from about 1856 until World War II, Johnson said that it was only Behrens and Van de Velde who broke away from the prevalent style-based architectural expression of these times to produce a “modernism” that was a blend of the English Arts and Crafts Movement and Art Nouveau.¹²⁶ Further, Johnson generously credited Behrens with establishing a link to the men whose thought underpinned the English Arts and Crafts Movement—that is, with contributing to architecture “the practice of structural honesty derived from the theories of Ruskin and Morris.”¹²⁷ Johnson also linked Behrens to Morris by noting their common hatred of the Renaissance but observed that, while Behrens, like Ruskin, admired the work of the craftsmen of the Middle Ages, he did not share the latter’s desire for a Gothic Revival.¹²⁸

Behrens began his career as a painter, then shifted to the crafts in the 1890s. His career as an architect began only in 1900-01, with the design and construction of his house at Darmstadt, built as part of the exhibit which opened there at the time. Behrens’ later career is distinguished by his architectural efforts and by his *oeuvre* as an industrial designer.

Behrens had come to Munich in 1889 and, beginning shortly thereafter, closely associated himself with the artist Otto Eckmann who, like Behrens, had made the transition from pursuing the fine arts to concentrating on craftwork. Eckmann, whose own conversion came in 1894, was influenced in the 1890s by the English Pre-Raphaelite painters close to Morris. This influence might have encouraged familiarity on the part of those with whom he associated in Munich, like Behrens, with the artistic activities of the

¹²⁵Alan Windsor, Peter Behrens—Architect and Designer (The Architectural Press, London, 1981), p. 2.

¹²⁶Philip Johnson, Mies van der Rohe (The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., 1953), 2nd ed. (first pub. in 1947), p. 10.

¹²⁷Ibid, p. 16.

¹²⁸Ibid, p. 20. Much of the information upon which the observations about Behrens’ connections to the Arts and Crafts are based is owed to Windsor’s work.

Morris group. Bruno Paul, who has been commented on earlier in this discussion in regard to English Arts and Crafts connections, was also working in Munich when Behrens was there. In the late 1890s, Behrens was drawn into the group in Munich that founded the Vereinigten Werkstätten für Kunst in Handwerk (United Studios for Art in Handcraft) and he participated in first exhibition of the Werkstätte held in Munich's Glaspalast in 1899.¹²⁹

Another aspect of Behrens' career to note in the context of influence from the English Arts and Crafts begins with his activity at Darmstadt. Behrens was one of the original seven participants of the newly formed art colony (already mentioned in the foregoing discussion on Olbrich) and was involved in an exhibition at the colony's first show (June 3, 1899). The earlier work in Darmstadt (1897-1898) of the English arts and crafts architects Baillie-Scott and Ashbee (also brought up previously) could have had an impact on Behrens also. In 1900, Behrens began work at Darmstadt on a house for himself, one intended to be shown like a number of others, at the colony's next exhibition. It was the only such building not designed by Olbrich.¹³⁰

Behrens' house at Darmstadt, like those placed in Olbrich's charge, shows a combination of Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau qualities. Windsor has described the exterior of Behrens' house as evoking the character of the traditional housing of the north-German coast (from whence its designer originally hailed) and of that of the frontier areas bordering Holland and Denmark.¹³¹ Thus regional German vernacular is expressed in a manner comparable to the way vernacular characteristics in England were captured by Arts and Crafts architects there. Hitchcock has observed that it is like the plan for Behrens' house at Darmstadt but has also linked it to Wright's work. Hitchcock said that its plan was like the one Wright developed for his own house of 1889 in Oak Park, Illinois, although no direct connection between

¹²⁹Such well-known Munich architects associated with Art Nouveau (Jugendstil in Germany) as August Endell and Hermann Obrist also participated in the exhibition.

¹³⁰Behrens paid his first visit to Paris that year also, a year in which Hector Guimard was busily populating the metro entrances there with Art Nouveau forms.

¹³¹Op.cit., p. 18

these two roughly contemporary works was suggested.¹³² Wright did exercise a strong influence on Behrens' work, an influence which supplanted previous ones, Banham has noted, starting from the time of and by virtue of, the Wasmuth publications of 1910-11. Thus, some English Arts and Crafts principles absorbed by Wright (or developed independently along parallel lines) and then expressed in his work, could have come to Behrens in this manner.

But Banham and Hitchcock have both noted the influence of the English Arts and Crafts Movement on Behrens even before the time of the Wasmuth publications.¹³³ For example, as Banham has noted, there is the impact of Muthesius' Das Englische Haus (in which Lethaby's work was featured amongst a number of others) on buildings like Behrens' Obenauer House (1905-06) at Sankt Johann, near Saarbrücken.¹³⁴ Hitchcock has written that Behrens was under the influence of Mackintosh and Olbrich by 1902 and also related the Obenauer House to Voysey's work which he observed was well-known in Germany by then because of coverage in, among other sources, Muthesius' book and issues of the Studio.¹³⁵

The year after completion of his house at Darmstadt, Behrens became dissatisfied with the colony there and by the end of the year was holding discussions with Muthesius in regard to becoming director of the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts) in Düsseldorf. Muthesius, having just returned to Germany from England, was attempting (as mentioned earlier) to implement a thorough reform of schools which fell under his jurisdiction (by virtue of his position as Prussian Minister of Trade) based on the ideas he had acquired across the Channel. Muthesius' plans included the Düsseldorf School, and Behrens was the person Muthesius wanted to lead the attempt at reform there.¹³⁶ It should be noted that Hans

¹³²Hitchcock, Architecture: 19th and 20th Centuries, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1971, p. 457.

¹³³Banham, op.cit., p. 70 and Hitchcock, op.cit., p. 457.

¹³⁴Ibid, p. 70.

¹³⁵Op.cit., p. 457.

¹³⁶Düsseldorf, in fact, was one of the first schools to feel the effects of Muthesius' bent toward drastic reform, so Windsor has noted (op.cit., p. 53).

Poelzig enjoyed similar attention from Muthesius in the form of his administrative appointment to the art school at Breslau.

Behrens wrote to Muthesius in 1903, in regard to the Düsseldorf appointment, that one of his priorities in administering the school would be “the practical application of art to real problems.”¹³⁷ This would have been compatible with Lethaby’s aims as would a further comment by Behrens in the letter which showed his distaste for making “theory” a dominant concern. Behrens also told Muthesius that he intended to visit certain schools in order to learn first-hand how to put progressive ideas into practice. Going to Vienna (where the dominant progressive personality among the academics there would have been Wagner) Behrens said was essential, as were visits to The Hague, Glasgow and London.

Behrens moved to Düsseldorf in March 1903, but shortly afterward (in June) he journeyed to the British Isles, presumably to visit the aforementioned schools in London and Glasgow. At this time Lethaby was well-established not only as the Principal of the London Central School but also as the first Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art, where extensive reforms with Lethaby’s prominent involvement, had recently been effected. Unless Lethaby was then on holiday in the British Isles or abroad then—Behrens’ visit was in the summer and Lethaby was in France at some point in 1903—it is likely that he met Behrens in London. Near the end of June Behrens wrote Muthesius and thanked him for being his guide in England and Scotland and confessed his admiration for a work of the English architect Lutyens in the Arts and Crafts idiom, “Munstead Wood,” (1896, Surrey).¹³⁸ Another letter to Muthesius, the next month, again gives evidence of Behrens’ favorable impressions from his travels in England and Scotland. Curiously though, if Windsor is correct, British influence on Behrens’ own built work after this time was slight.¹³⁹

Behrens’ efforts to recruit an outstanding faculty for the Düsseldorf school remind one of Lethaby’s similar efforts earlier at the London School and also, later, to the successful attempt to assemble an

¹³⁷Windsor, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

¹³⁸*Ibid*, p. 54.

¹³⁹*Ibid*.

outstanding group of teachers at the Bauhaus. Behrens tried to persuade Kandinsky (later a Bauhaus faculty members) who was then based in the art-oriented Munich suburb of Schwabing, to come to Düsseldorf. Behrens and Kandinsky had something in common in regard to their Munich activities as Kandinsky was a member of the Vereinigten für angewandte Kunst (the Union of Applied Art) which had grown out of the Vereinigten Werkstätten which Behrens had helped found. The recruiting effort, however, was not successful and a similar result came from Behrens' effort to lure the eminent calligrapher Edward Johnston (on the advice of Muthesius) from the London Central School. Behrens did obtain, however, the services of Anna Simons to teach in Johnston's place. A notable calligrapher in her own right, it should be mentioned that she translated Johnston's book, Writing, Illuminating and Lettering (for which Lethaby wrote the Forward) into German. In another link to the English Arts and Crafts, it can be mentioned that Behrens, in paying tribute to Simon's abilities, cited her familiarity with the English School of calligraphy stemming from Johnston, Morris and others.

Behrens' friendship with Karl Ernst Osthaus from the first decade of the twentieth century should be mentioned in the context of the present discussion. In 1904 Behrens was awarded a commission by this patron and friend to design the lecture theatre inside the Folkwang Museum at Hagen. However, Van de Velde, who can also be connected to English arts and crafts activity (as will be treated a little later in this discussion), had earlier been involved in work on this Hagen museum, dating from before its opening in 1902. In another arts and crafts connection linking Behrens and Osthaus, one occurring a number of years later (Summer, 1913), a room dedicated to the showing of Behrens' work was set up as part of an exhibit in Ghent at the Deutsches Museum für Kunst in Handel and Gewerbe (the German Museum of Commerce and Applied Art). The sponsoring institution, an organization set up by Osthaus, collected the kind of product produced by the Deutscher Werkbund which, in turn, derived some of its characteristics (as noted earlier) from the English Arts and Crafts.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰Osthaus thought that Behrens' room should be the focal point of the exhibit (Windsor, op.cit., p. 137).

Behrens' involvement with the Deutscher Werkbund constitutes his other connection with Muthesius of interest in this discussion and thus, with Lethaby and the English Arts and Crafts.¹⁴¹ For the Werkbund Exposition of 1914, Behrens had designed the central Festhalle to be used for exhibitions, lectures, etc. This space was the scene of the important debate between Muthesius and Van de Velde (and their respective supporters) over the future direction the Werkbund was to take. In the debate itself, Behrens inclined more towards Van de Velde's point of view in the latter's championing of individualism, the need to raise public taste and to improve the quality of the environment. This contrasted with Muthesius' emphasis on the necessity of developing further the processes of standardization. Generally, however, as Windsor has noted, Behrens was a moderating influence in the controversy.¹⁴² During the First World War, which resulted in the abrupt closure of this Exposition, Behrens acted as an advisor to the government on matters relating to architecture and building, as did fellow Werkbund representative Muthesius. After the war, in 1919, Behrens withdrew from the executive group of the Werkbund and in that year also, as Windsor has noted, he retreated from the concept of sachlichkeit (common-sense objectivity), which had linked him more to the Werkbund principles (and to those of the English Arts and Crafts) in favor of an approach which could be characterized as expressionist.¹⁴³ Such works as the office quarters for the dyeworks at Hoechst (from 1920) show this new direction. Behrens continued his participation, however, in the Werkbund—exhibiting at the 1927 Stuttgart exhibition.

A later phase of Behrens' career, one which placed him more directly in the orbit of the Austrian progressive architects who also, as discussed earlier, can be linked to the English Arts and Crafts began in 1922. He had been called back to the Düsseldorf school after the First World War but left the next year to

¹⁴¹This could also be said of Hans Poelzig who exhibited with the Werkbund in Stuttgart in 1927, for example.

¹⁴²Windsor, op.cit., p. 139.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 149.

become Professor at the Master School of Architecture in Vienna—a post that he held until 1936.¹⁴⁴ He succeeded Wagner, who had already died. In 1930, Behrens summed up his priorities at the Austrian school by stressing the following points, all of which Lethaby could have agreed with:

- 1) The importance of town planning.
- 2) Cooperation with engineers.
- 3) The obligation of architects to help provide housing for the masses.
- 4) The necessity of an interest in hand-crafts.
- 5) The need to integrate painting and sculpture into architectural efforts.¹⁴⁵

James Fitch has written in his study of Gropius that Behrens had studied with Otto Wagner but this appears not to be correct at least in the sense of his having taken formal, academic training or working in Wagner's office.¹⁴⁶ Wagner, much earlier than the time at which Behrens took up his teaching position in Vienna, could have exercised influence by other means on Behrens, however. For example, when Behrens resided in Munich (from 1889) he was only 250 miles from Vienna, which could have been not then too arduous a journey. Also, as noted, Behrens in 1903, in preparation for his work in the Düsseldorf School, had assigned a high priority to visiting Vienna and might logically have sought Wagner out at that time. Somewhat later, in 1912, the year of Wagner's official "retirement," it is known that Behrens supported Wagner's entry in a competition for which Behrens acted as an assessor.

From the 1920s at least, Behrens was on friendly terms with another Austrian architect who has been brought up earlier in this discussion, Josef Hoffman. Hoffman was still head of the Wiener Werkstätte when Behrens came to Vienna to teach. Later, along with Hoffman, Behrens served as a vice-president (beginning in 1933) of a new Austrian Werkbund established under National Socialist control. In July that year, in place of the original Austrian Werkbund (founded in 1910 and closely linked with its

¹⁴⁴In 1936 Behrens returned to Berlin to take up the post as head of the Master School of Architecture at the Akademie der Künste, following the death of Poelzig.

¹⁴⁵Windsor, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

¹⁴⁶James Marston Fitch, Walter Gropius (George Braziller, Inc., N.Y., 1960), p. 18.

German counterpart) this organization, through the implementation of exclusionary policies and other controls thrust on it by the National Socialists, was rendered essentially defunct.¹⁴⁷

Another connection between Behrens and the English Arts and Crafts which has to do with the National Socialists can be noted here. But first, the general observance that the National Socialists, as was noted earlier in the chapter, tried to encourage a style of domestic architecture in Germany which had similar qualities to those of the country's earlier arts and crafts work which in turn shows, to some extent, the influence of English stylistic counterparts. There are, for both the earlier English Arts and Crafts and that in Germany, some common roots as well as aims and characteristics of production. To return to Behrens' case specifically, it can be mentioned that for a prominent member of the Nazi hierarchy itself, Hermann Goering, Behrens (who collaborated with the Nazis in the 1930s) designed a hunting lodge ("Karinhall") north of Berlin which had some characteristics that one associates with English Arts and Crafts work. Davey, who has noticed this, pointed out as evidence the approach taken in the design of the lodge's great hall.¹⁴⁸

On another topic relating to Behrens, attention could be called to the fact that Lethaby's interest in providing mass housing (which dated back to the 1890s) has its counterpart in the German architect's activities. During the First World War for example, a good deal of Behrens' office work was directed towards the solution of housing problems. His projects from this time include a housing estate (1915-18) at Lichtenberg (as eastern suburb of Berlin), an estate (1917) at Spandau (to the west of Berlin) and a number of semi-detached houses (1918) added to the AEG residential complex at Hennigsdorf. Other examples include Behrens' work in Vienna, for instance, his design of 1924 for housing in the Winarskyhof area. In Vienna about that time also Behrens planned another housing scheme and again, one in 1928. For the 1927 Werkbund Exposition in Stuttgart in which all exhibitors were required to produce prototypes for potentially mass-producible housing, Behrens contributed his terrassenhaus idea—a

¹⁴⁷Important architects of the Modern Movement as diverse as Haring, Lurçat and Rietveld had exhibited at the 1932 exhibition.

¹⁴⁸Davey, op.cit., p. 210.

four-story apartment block scheme. Lethaby, although in favor of housing for the masses, never clearly championed mass-production in the sense it was understood on the Continent. He did voice his approval, by 1923, of making some kind of efforts towards standardization.

Comparing Behrens' practice with Lethaby's theory, it seems that they were both somewhat conservative relative to other architects identified with progressive developments in early twentieth century architecture. However, Behrens, in the houses mentioned in the previous paragraph, did use both concrete and clinker breeze-block, although these were not the materials he preferred for this project. Lethaby had eventually come, a few years before, to voice a fairly positive opinion about concrete as a legitimate architectural material.

Lethaby's interest in city planning also has its counterpart in Behrens' work. Behrens was much more able to achieve tangible results than Lethaby in this area. One could cite the former's involvement with planning (in the post-World War I period) of the industrial town of Forst (Lausitz) in 1919 (now on the border with Poland), or the smaller town (probably 1919) of Neusalz-on-the-Oder in Silesia (now Nowosol, Poland).

Mendelsohn (and Taut and Scharoun)

There are some events in the earlier part of the career of the German architect Eric Mendelsohn (born the same year as Schindler) that might be noted in the context of the present discussion. Wolf von Eckhardt has stated that, beginning with Mendelsohn's student days in Munich around 1912, some influence by Van de Velde who one can connect in some ways to the Arts and Crafts, can be posited.¹⁴⁹ Also, Latham has noted that Olbrich's Darmstadt work inspired Mendelsohn (as well as that of a fellow German architect of the expressionist school, Bruno Taut).¹⁵⁰ Later, on Mendelsohn's visits to Holland (1919 and 1923) he not only looked at the uncompromisingly expressionist works such as those of de Klerk, but also the creations by Berlage, which were closer to the spirit of the English Arts and Crafts.

¹⁴⁹Wolf von Eckhardt, erich mendelsohn (George Braziller, Inc., N.Y., 1960), p. 17.

¹⁵⁰Latham, op.cit., p. 148.

Mendelsohn also visited a housing development designed by J.J.P. Oud, who had ties, later at least, with the Deutscher Werkbund, exhibiting with this organization in 1927 for example. Mendelsohn also came into contact (in 1921) with one of the younger members of the Viennese School who had been influenced, as discussed earlier, by English Arts and Crafts principles—Richard Neutra, who was five years Mendelsohn's junior.¹⁵¹

Von Eckhardt has noted that, by the early 1920s at least, Mendelsohn had become enthusiastic about Wright's work and helped to make it known in Germany.¹⁵² On Mendelsohn's visits to Holland he may have seen some of the Wrightian work of a few years earlier by Dutch architects like Robert van t'Hoff. Mendelsohn's villa (1923) for Dr. Sternefeld in Berlin also shows the effects of Wright. Von Eckhardt has compared it to Wright's much earlier Robie House (1909) in Chicago.¹⁵³ Mendelsohn visited the United States in 1924 and came to see Wright at Taliesin. Neutra was then working there and the three conversed together, Von Eckhardt has noted.¹⁵⁴ What Mendelsohn got from Wright, however, was not in large part the result of the legacy of the English Arts and Crafts. He would not have gotten much even in England itself where he went to live in March, 1933, for whatever force the Arts and Crafts had exercised there had long since faded. One other event that might be noted which connects Mendelsohn to the Wrightian tradition was the friendship he developed beginning in 1925 with Barry Byrne, who had worked for Wright in the first decade of the twentieth century and afterward had established an important Prairie School practice of his own. In the 1920s, Byrne was moving away from the forms of the Prairie School idiom (although not, perhaps, from its principles) and probably was

¹⁵¹Mendelsohn added Neutra to his office staff at the time when he was undertaking the additions to the offices of the Berliner Tageblatt. He had entered a competition with Neutra the next year for a business center in Haifa.

¹⁵²Wolf Von Eckhardt, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

influenced more by Mendelsohn when they met in 1925 than vice versa.¹⁵⁵ Some legacy of the English Arts and Crafts must have been retained by both Mendelsohn and by the slightly older Byrne (although the ingredients retained varied) but how potent this was and whether their meeting produced any new mix in this regard in either of their approaches to architecture it has not been possible to ascertain. Either Mendelsohn could have been exposed to some principles derived from the Arts and Crafts directly, via inspiration by Wright's work, or indirectly via the American's Dutch emulators.

Another German expressionist, Bruno Taut, can be connected more clearly to the activities of the English-inspired Deutscher Werkbund. Taut attended the important Werkbund Congress in 1911 and exhibited, for example, at the Werkbund exhibitions of 1914 and 1927.¹⁵⁶ The participation in Werkbund activity of another expressionist architect, Hans Poelzig (who was associated with Muthesius from the earliest years of the Werkbund), has already been noted and still another, Hans Scharoun, it should be mentioned, exhibited with the group, at least in the case of the 1927 exhibition.

Gropius

Walter Gropius began work in Behrens' office the same year (1907) that the latter took on the important position as chief industrial designer for the AEG and the same year that the Deutscher Werkbund was been founded (with Behrens' participation). Gropius stayed in Behrens' office for four years (1907-11) although he also opened his own office the year before leaving. At some time during the course of his work under Behrens he became chief assistant.

Gropius, in 1960, observed that he owed Behrens much and perhaps some part of this could be traced to the effects on Behrens of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. Certainly, in Gropius' later teachings at the Bauhaus (from 1919, when he took over the schools in Weimar from Van de Velde) and

¹⁵⁵On the same visit to Germany one exponent of an architectural point of view which exhibits a legacy from the Arts and Crafts, Byrne, studied that of another who has been linked with this source of influence—the work of Hans Poelzig. A similar situation could be cited in the case of Byrne's visit to the Bauhaus although the school's leader at that time, Gropius (who also experienced some effects from the English Arts and Crafts, as noted earlier) was away at the time.

¹⁵⁶The influence of the Arts and Crafts point of view on Taut via the Austrian School (more specifically, Olbrich) has already been noted in the foregoing comments on Mendelsohn.

later, in his educational work at Harvard (beginning in 1937) several principles can be identified as being similar to Lethaby's. One (which is shown through the way affairs were conducted at the Bauhaus) is the commitment to a common education for craftsmen, practitioners of the fine arts (like painters) and architects. Another hallmark of Lethaby's point of view, a belief in learning by doing, was also a key ingredient in the educational procedures at the Bauhaus. Also, Lethaby's predilection towards pursuing collaborative methods rather than design solutions attributable more to individual effort has a parallel in Gropius' teaching methods as head of the Bauhaus and later of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard—and, for that matter, in his practice.

A connection can be made between Gropius and the English Arts and Crafts by virtue of his links to the Deutscher Werkbund in which he was an on-going participant. He was in attendance at the important Werkbund Congress of 1911 and exhibited at the Werkbund expositions of 1914 and 1927. Also, he was in charge, on behalf of the Werkbund, of the German exhibit at the Paris Exhibition of 1930. Interestingly, however, he disliked Werkbund founder Muthesius, even though he owed his position at Weimar to the latter's recommendation.¹⁵⁷

Another circumstance dating from Gropius' early days should be noted in the context of this discussion. This is the patronage of Osthaus (also the patron, as previously noted, of others influenced by the English Arts and Crafts, such as Behrens and Van de Velde), one instance of which was the travelling photo exhibition Gropius organized for him in 1913.

Like his mentor, Behrens, and like Lethaby, Gropius was interested in the problems of mass housing and is better known for his efforts in this area than are the other two. Some evidence of Gropius' efforts in this area are his designs for housing for workers at Toerten (Dessau, 1926-27), his middle-class apartments at Siemenstadt (Berlin, 1929) and his (proposed) high-rise apartments for Wannsee (Berlin, 1931). In regard to a somewhat related subject (standardization), it should be noted that he was interested

¹⁵⁷The antipathy of Muthesius' and Gropius' views is suggested in Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

in this much earlier than Lethaby (at least as early as 1909) and his work with pre-fabrication went beyond (in the direction of standardized production) what Lethaby had suggested in his writings.

In harmony with Lethaby's calls for experiment in architecture (from 1890), and his (much later) positive utterances about the machine (from the mid-point of the second decade of the twentieth century) are such efforts by Gropius as the designs involving pre-fabrication that he exhibited at the Werkbund Exhibition of 1927, his emphasis on pre-fabrication and standardization in the presentation of the German exhibition at the Paris fair of 1930, and his design of 1931 for a German manufacturer. Of course, interest in prefabrication for exhibition buildings can be traced back in time to a point quite a bit before 1930. The London Crystal Palace from 1851 is an easy earlier example. As with Mendelsohn, Gropius' stay in England in the 1930s (1934-47 actually) came too late to absorb much direct effect of the English Arts and Crafts Movement in that period.

Mies van der Rohe

Gropius' contemporary, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (Mies was actually about three years younger) came to Behrens' office to work as a draftsman and designer the year after Gropius did. Mies could therefore have been exposed, as in the case of Gropius, to any of Behrens' ideas which may have been derived from or reinforced as a consequence of his visits to England or because of Behrens' association with Muthesius. Mies left about the same time as Gropius, circa 1911. After leaving Behrens' office Mies travelled to the Netherlands where he had earlier spent some time while working for Behrens. A consequence of this stay in the Netherlands (at The Hague) Phillip Johnson has noted, was that Mies became impressed with the work of Berlage whose affirmative connections to English Arts and Crafts work have already been brought up. Like Behrens and Gropius, Mies supported the Werkbund and was in attendance at the important Werkbund Congress in 1911. In later years he served as First Vice-president of the organization (1926) and directed the Werkbund's Stuttgart exhibition (1927). Mies also exhibited in the Stuttgart exhibition and in this context another connection to the Arts and Crafts, one involving Frank Lloyd Wright, might be brought up. Johnson has claimed that every exhibitor at the 1927

exhibition (including Gropius, Oud and Le Corbusier) felt the impact of Wright, although he does not say this was manifest in all of the work on display at the exhibition.¹⁵⁸ A later involvement of note by Mies in the activities of the Werkbund was his service as the director of the Werkbund section (with the theme being “The Dwelling”) of the Berlin Building Exposition of 1931.

Whatever lessons Mies might have taken from the English Arts and Crafts Movement or from parallel or related developments in Germany are not easily perceivable in Mies’ work. However, as Director of the Bauhaus (1930-33) succeeding Hannes Meyer, Mies appears partially at least to have accepted those Arts and Crafts values noted in the foregoing discussion of Gropius’ involvement with the school. In his early career at least, Mies did devote some attention to such issues which had interested Lethaby as those having to do with mass housing and urban problems and Mies, within certain parameters, certainly tried, as Lethaby had counseled, to be experimental and to utilize the benefits of science in architectural work. Standardization, certain kinds of which, at least, received Lethaby’s endorsement, was also an interest of Mies’. It was intended to be an important component of the work shown at the 1927 Werkbund exhibition of which he was in charge.¹⁵⁹

Holland—Van t’Hoff, Wils, Dudok and Rietveld

Several Dutch architects, besides Berlage, might be brought up in a discussion of the effects of English Arts and Crafts. These would include, among the more well-known early twentieth century architects of the country, Robert Van t’Hoff, Jan Wils, J.J.P. Oud, Gerrit Rietveld, Willem Dudock and perhaps Mark Stam. The rationale for including these people in pursuing the topic at hand is dependent on the fact that they interacted with and/or were influenced by others already discussed, who can be connected to the English Arts and Crafts. Wright and contemporary German and Austrian architects were the principal mediating elements in this regard. In the case of Robert Van t’Hoff, Wright, who made quite an impact on several early twentieth century Dutch architects, was the important figure. Van t’Hoff had

¹⁵⁸Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁹Arnold Whittick, “Deutscher Werkbund,” *Encyclopedia of Modern...* (1964), *op.cit.*, Gerd Hatje, ed., pp. 86-87.

visited the United States before World War I and had travelled to Chicago. He had seen Wright's works in Chicago and nearby areas, Unity Temple and the Robie House for example. He was particularly impressed, Banham has said, with the latter work.¹⁶⁰ Wright's early work in particular, shows evidence, as discussed earlier, of the influence the English Arts and Crafts and this influence shows up again, to some degree, in the work of Wright's Dutch admirers such as t'Hoff and Wils. Frampton has described Van t'Hoff's house built in 1916 (Huis ter Heide on the outskirts of Utrecht) as a "remarkably convincing Wrightian villa" as well as noting (as had Banham) the building's significance as a pioneering work in reinforced concrete.¹⁶¹ Frampton has also drawn attention to the existence of a number of contemporary Wrightian works by Wils, although he has described them as "less elegant" than the related work by Van t'Hoff.¹⁶² Frampton has also referred to another prominent Dutch architect Dudok (a contemporary of Van Doesburg and half a decade older than Oud) as a "Wrightian architect."¹⁶³

Van t'Hoff had also been in London before the outbreak of the First World War and thus may have been familiar first-hand with English Arts and Crafts work, as well as knowing about it through coverage in Continental periodicals. Like Lethaby, he designed and constructed furniture in addition to his architectural activities, and some by Van t'Hoff was made in Rietveld's shop, a circumstance which has caused some (Banham, for instance) to observe that it may have been Van t'Hoff who introduced Wright's work to Rietveld.¹⁶⁴ The latter, it can be noted, would fit Lethaby's idea of the architect who knew the crafts well. But Rietveld must have also experienced some effects from Continental sources with ties to the English Arts and Crafts, such as the Werkbund organizations. An example of his contact

¹⁶⁰Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁶¹Frampton, *op.cit.*, p. 143 and Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 154. There was actually a house and a summer house built by Van t'Hoff at Huis ter Heide, both in the Wrightian idiom.

¹⁶²Frampton, *Ibid.*; Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 154, mentioned Wils' restaurant, "De Dubbele Sleutel" of 1919 as one of Wils' Wrightian works.

¹⁶³Frampton, *op.cit.*, p. 120

¹⁶⁴Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

with such groups was his participation in the 1932 Austrian Werkbund exhibition, although his most influential architectural work had, at this point, already been accomplished.

Oud

The impact of the English Arts and Crafts (and of Lethaby) on J.J.P. Oud, as in the case of Van t'Hoff and Rietveld (and German contemporaries like Gropius and Mies van der Rohe) is of a rather indirect kind. Still, this influential Dutch architect must have felt the effect of the English Movement in a number of ways. One of these concerns Muthesius. Some of Oud's earliest architectural work, the closest in his oeuvre to that of the English Arts and Crafts shows, as Gunther Stamm has observed, the impact of Muthesius' publications dealing with English residences.¹⁶⁵ Examples of this early work, when Oud was in his early to mid-twenties, are the Gerrit Oud House (Aalsmeer, 1912) and the Van Essen-Vincker House (Blaricum, 1915). Another related avenue leads to Berlage, whose work was characterized earlier as paralleling that of the English Arts and Crafts architects rather than springing directly from it.

Berlage was greatly admired by Oud.¹⁶⁶ Stamm has noted the evidence of Berlage's influence (which includes some qualities shared with English Arts and Crafts work) on Oud's 1915 design for a retirement home in Hilversum. Also, from the year before, in collaboration with Dudok who was at that point apparently under Berlage's influence, there can be seen the influence of the latter on Oud's design for some workers' housing at Leiderdorp.¹⁶⁷ Stamm saw also the evidence of Berlage's influence (and thus one could suggest possibly some commonalities with the approach employed by those involved in the English Movement) in Oud's project for a public bath (1915-16) and his proposed Soldier's Club (for Den Helden, 1915).¹⁶⁸ One could mention also, by similar reasoning, the Oud Factory which the architect designed for a relative in 1919 at Pumerend. This work also was influenced by Berlage, Stamm has

¹⁶⁵Gunther Stamm, The Architecture of J.J.P. Oud—1906-1963 (The University Presses of Florida, Tallahassee, 1978), pp. 14-15.

¹⁶⁶J.J. Vriend, "Oud," Encyclopedia... (1964), op.cit., Gerd Hatje, ed., p. 222.

¹⁶⁷Stamm, op.cit., p. 17.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 18.

observed, as well as by Wright, whose connection to Oud will be the subject of a little more discussion shortly.

Stamm has written that Oud also “had a profound admiration for Behrens’ work,” a fact which he claimed (in 1978) was little known.¹⁶⁹ The admiration of Behrens who, as previously discussed, must have felt rather directly the effects of the English Movement, began in Oud’s case around 1909, Stamm has noted.¹⁷⁰ Oud’s Ambach School (circa 1916-17, Den Helden), Stamm has observed, shows Behrens’ influence.¹⁷¹ Considering other English Arts and Crafts-related German influences on Oud there is also, as Stamm has noted, that traceable to the Werkbund. This latter source has not, as with other influences on Oud by contemporaries generally, been sufficiently looked into.¹⁷² In the 1920s, Stamm has said, Oud did participate at least, as did the younger Dutch architect Mart Stam, in Werkbund activities. Oud exhibited, for example, at the 1927 Werkbund show. Oud could thus have absorbed some of the same ideas adopted from the English Arts and Crafts as had done other figures involved in the Werkbund, like Behrens, Gropius, etc. Also, another German-speaking architect with connections to the English Arts and Crafts, the Austrian Hoffman, has been cited (by Frampton) as an influence (circa 1918) on Oud.¹⁷³

Somewhat out of harmony with the foregoing is a remark by Banham to the effect that Oud had rarely shown an interest in the work of any architect outside Holland except that of Frank Lloyd Wright.¹⁷⁴ While this comment seems to be an overstatement, it is true that Oud was influenced, besides through the other sources mentioned, by Wright for whom, as stated earlier, the English Arts and Crafts was a major source of inspiration. Stamm and Banham have both attributed Oud’s initial knowledge of Wright to the introduction to that American’s work provided by Van t’Hoff, although Stamm included in

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Frampton, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁷⁴Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 156.

his study of Oud the conflicting information gathered from Oud's wife that it was Berlage who performed this introduction service.¹⁷⁵ Stamm has cited Oud's design for a two-family worker's house of 1917 as evidence of the influence of Wright (as thus, probably, of the Arts and Crafts perspective).¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Banham has noted the influence of Wright (with the possibility again of ingredients traceable to the English Arts and Crafts) on Oud's design for a hostel in 1919. Wright's influence on Oud, which came about either through Van t'Hoff or more direct means, lasted until 1920 Stamm has observed.¹⁷⁷

Finally, it might be noted that Oud shared Lethaby's interest in mass housing. Evidence of Oud's attention to this question is his housing estate design for Rotterdam beginning in 1920 (about two years after he became Rotterdam's city architect), his Kiefhoek Estate (from 1925) and the Tussechendijken Estate (1928).

Belgium and France—Van de Velde

Henri Van de Velde's connection to the English Arts and Crafts seems to exist in two contexts, which can be related to the principal phases of his career—the first, when he was a major force in Art Nouveau activity in the homeland of Art Nouveau, his native Belgium, and later, his role as a prominent participant in German activities associated with the contributions that country made toward the development of “modern” architecture.

Robert Delevoy has pointed out that Van de Velde first became aware of the English Arts and Crafts in 1889 as a consequence of his participation in the avant-garde group Les Vingt.¹⁷⁸ Delevoy observed that a short time after this date there began a shift in orientation in Van de Velde's work away

¹⁷⁵For Stamm's comments see p. 21, *op.cit.*

¹⁷⁶Stamm, *op.cit.*, p. 25. It has not been possible to ascertain what Wrightian qualities in these works by Oud in the late second decade of the twentieth century embody Arts and Crafts principles (if any) or whether other characteristics of Wright's work were involved.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.* Another connection involving an American who emerged from the same Prairie School background as Wright's, centers around Barry Byrne, who visited Holland in 1925 and looked at the work of Oud, among others. (H. Allen Brooks, *op.cit.*, p. 328). This was the same European trip that took Byrne to Germany (previously commented upon) and to France.

¹⁷⁸Robert Delevoy, “Van de Velde,” *Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture* (1964), Gerd Hatje, ed., p. 312.

from the fine arts and towards the crafts.¹⁷⁹ Vande Velde had given up painting in 1893 and his first furniture production dates from the following year. He participated in the 1897 exhibition of applied art at Dresden (and planned the décor of a room and designed its contents for a later applied art exhibition there in 1906). The 1897 undertaking and the interior design work he performed at the Folkwang Museum in Hagen for Osthaus in 1900-02 was decidedly Art Nouveau in character, although Van de Velde, interestingly, disavowed any connection with this idiom. Also, in Germany before the turn of the century (in 1899), Van de Velde obtained commissions for other work in the sphere of the applied arts from the Hohenzollern Craftwork Shop.

The house Van de Velde built for himself in Uccle (near Brussels) in 1895 seems to be his most important architectural creation which can be linked to the English Arts and Crafts. Delevoy had singled out Van de Velde's dedication, in the realization of this dwelling, to the kind of holistic design approach that the architects of the English Movement aimed for—one that was, moreover (also like the English Arts and Crafts approach in planning) “organic.”¹⁸⁰ Delevoy has pointed out that some tenets of Van de Velde's theory, also shared by exponents of the Arts and Crafts, are manifested in the Uccle House, such as his rejection of detail taken from the architecture of the past and his commitment to the use of building materials in a logical, direct way. The house is described as being “in the uniform style of English inspiration.”¹⁸¹ Like Lethaby and other English Arts and Crafts architects, Van de Velde rejected ornament derived from the historical styles but could not give up ornament altogether, although the ornament that Van de Velde and Lethaby developed to replace the types rejected greatly differed.

Van de Velde's work does seem to be a blend of the approach of the English Arts and Crafts Movement and that of Art Nouveau. Philip Johnson has pointed this out in describing Van de Velde (as he was in the second, one could say, German phase of this career) as one of the few architects in Germany in 1907 (the other being Behrens) who was working in a mode different from the eighteenth century

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

revival style which was then popular in that country.¹⁸² In the sense that Vande Velde's work was a fusion of Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau approaches, he was the Continental counterpart of Mackintosh.

In Germany (from 1901) Van de Velde acted as art counselor to the Grand Duke of Saxony and in 1906 Van de Velde founded the Weimar School of Applied Arts, thanks to the same patronage.¹⁸³ His tenure at Weimar lasted effectively from 1906 to 1914, during which time he brought about a kind of arts and crafts synthesis by becoming head of both Weimar's fine arts school as well as the one for applied art.¹⁸⁴ His direction in the latter capacity included a commitment to eliminate from the curriculum—and Lethaby would have approved of this—the study of the historical styles and what he believed to be an inappropriate reliance on the past in general.

Amongst Van de Velde's other activities in Germany was his participation in the activities of the Werkbund (he was associated with Muthesius in this enterprise from its early years) and thus some influence from the English Arts and Crafts (and probably Lethaby) by virtue of this connection would be likely. Van de Velde participated in the important Werkbund Exhibition of 1914, designing for it the Werkbund theatre. Here he was in the company of a number of other architects whose links to the English Arts and Crafts have been discussed earlier, such as Gropius, Behrens, Hoffman and Taut. It was in the Werkbund debate, which occurred at the Exhibition—the issue being the future thrust of Werkbund activity—that Van de Velde led the opposition to Muthesius' point of view. Van de Velde took the stance that the organization ought to focus on protecting the autonomy of designers and on raising the standards of public taste and the quality of environment; Muthesius called instead for more dedication to the processes of standardization.

¹⁸²Philip Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 10. Why the year 1907 is used was not clear in Johnson's text.

¹⁸³Ibid. Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 276, said that Van de Velde came to Weimar in 1903 although the actual founding of the School of Applied Arts could have still been 1906. Davey, *op.cit.*, p. 206, has written that Van de Velde was appointed head of the School of Arts and Crafts in Weimar in 1902.

¹⁸⁴Gropius who succeeded Van de Velde in the Weimar positions was able to more truly fuse the study of "arts" and "crafts" in Weimar. Gropius was appointed in 1915 but only took up the job in 1919.

Belgium and France—Horta and Guimard

Nothing can be related here about possible contacts with the English Arts and Crafts on the part of Horta, the most prominent Belgian Art Nouveau architect (but the English Movement through various personalities and works did have an influence on Art Nouveau). One can also note that Horta's goal of total integration in design was one shared with English Arts and Crafts practitioners (as well as with the other designers in the Art Nouveau idiom). Horta did spend from 1916 to 1918 during World War I in the United States where he saw the works realized up to that time by Wright, whose Arts and Crafts connections have already been brought up a number of times. Although Horta's principal contributions to architecture had taken place some years earlier (roughly by the turn of the twentieth century) he could have possibly absorbed, second-hand and belatedly, some principles of the Arts and Crafts point of view residing in Wright's work but not yet a part of the Belgian's approach. In Yvonne Brunhammer's Art Nouveau in Belgium, France it was pointed out that the façade of Horta's Palais des Beaux-Arts (Brussels, 1920-28), done after Horta's return from America, has similarities with Wright's style but what those similarities are was not discussed and it has not been looked into further in this study.¹⁸⁵

The English Arts and Crafts influenced the work of the acknowledged French master of Art Nouveau, Hector Guimard, along with that of Horta. Brunhammer has maintained that the work of the English Movement had a major effect on his career. She has written that "the turning point of Guimard's style (he had been expressing himself in an idiom derived from historical styles in previous work) came in 1894 and 1895, when he went to England, there discovering Domestic Revival architecture [Arts and Crafts work] and to Belgium, where he visited Horta's recently completed Hotel Tassel."¹⁸⁶ Brunhammer has point out, however, that even earlier, by 1893 (as the Hotel Jassedé of that year would show) Guimard

¹⁸⁵Yvonne Brunhammer et al., Art Nouveau—Belgium, France (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, Texas, 1976), p. 346.

¹⁸⁶Ibid, p. 480.

had accomplished, in accordance with Arts and Crafts aims, a totally integrated design—architecture, furniture, decoration, etc.¹⁸⁷

Belgium and France—Perret and Le Corbusier

It cannot be said what, if anything, Auguste Perret, whose experiments with concrete were contemporary with Lethaby's, derived from the English Arts and Crafts. That he experimented and tried to employ scientific knowledge in the service of architecture as Lethaby advocated is not in doubt, but it is unlikely that he drew the inspiration for this from English sources when there was such a rich tradition of activity of this kind in his home country. He did spend time in England—London, for example, where he supervised the construction of the Algerian Pavilion for an exhibition at Shepherd's Bush, even opening in connection with this, a temporary office in London at 64 Guilford Street near Russel Square. Thus, he would have been in the city at the time when Lethaby was prominent in London architectural circles.

Le Corbusier (Charles-Edouard Jenneret) worked for Perret for a time beginning in 1908 (until Spring 1909, 15 or 18 months so have said Robert Jordan and Peter Collins respectively) but Le Corbusier's exposure to the values of the English Arts and Crafts seem to come before and after rather than during this period and not in any event as a function of his contact with Perret.¹⁸⁸

One early connection of Le Corbusier to the arts and crafts in general was his own training as a craftsman (engraving and chasing) beginning in 1900 at the School of Applied Arts in his native town, La Chaux de Fonds in Switzerland. Another concerns his first extensive journey from La Chaux (in 1907, at age 20 approximately) during the course of which he came under the influence of the Viennese architects, who have, in some way, been connected in the preceding discussions with the English Arts and Crafts. Le Corbusier worked for several months in 1907 with Joseph Hoffman in the Wiener Werkstätte and was

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Willy Boesinger (ed.), *Le Corbusier* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 244; Peter Collins, *Concrete, the Vision of a New Architecture*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 228 and Robert Furneaux Jordan, *Le Corbusier*, (New York: Lawrence Hill and Co., N.Y., 1972), p. 14.

first exposed in Vienna then also to the ideas of Adolf Loos. Jordan has reported that Le Corbusier was not impressed with Hoffman's approach to ornament, however. He found it, as Lethaby must have, too elaborate.¹⁸⁹

After a stay in Paris (following the one in Vienna) during which time he worked for Perret, Le Corbusier returned to La Chaux and helped initiate, in 1909, the Ateliers de'art réunis. The next year he was sent, under the auspices of this art school, to Germany to make connections with the German Werkbund. At this time he came into contact with Behrens for whom he worked for five months in the company of Gropius and Mies van der Rohe. Whatever Behrens retained or accepted from his contact with the architecture of the English Movement, either directly or through Muthesius, he could have passed on to Le Corbusier. While in Germany too Le Corbusier was influenced by Muthesius himself.¹⁹⁰ Le Corbusier's experiences with the Werkbund, the organization he had come to Germany to learn about, included his attendance at the Werkbund Congress in 1911 when Muthesius gave one of his most important addresses. Banham has noted that what Muthesius said in 1911, some of it inspired by his contact with the English Arts and Crafts, appeared again in Le Corbusier's writings of the early 1920s.¹⁹¹ At this time, Le Corbusier had ceased to work for Behrens but still remained within the Werkbund "orbit," as Banham has pointed out—working in the Werkstätte colony at Hellerau which Karl Schmidt had started.¹⁹² Some impact of Berlage and Wright also must have been felt in the year following, when Le Corbusier attended lectures (probably in Zurich) by Berlage about Wright.

Some of Le Corbusier's early houses in his native La Chaux, particularly two from 1906-07 and 1908 (the Fallet House and the Jacquemet House, respectively) showed qualities common to the English Arts and Crafts—particularly their reflection of the character of the vernacular architecture of the region in which they were built. A house in the same town built slightly later, after his work with Hoffman and

¹⁸⁹Jordan, *Le Corbusier*, p. 14.

¹⁹⁰Boesinger, *op.cit.*, p. 244.

¹⁹¹Banham, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

¹⁹²*Ibid.*

Behrens, the Jeanneret House (1912, for his father) still showed similarity to the work of the English Movement but featured a more simple treatment of external forms and surfaces than the two earlier buildings just mentioned. Le Corbusier, in this early period, also produced a design (not built) for a School of Arts and Crafts for La Chaux.

It is not possible to say here that Le Corbusier read Lethaby's writings, although as pointed out in Chapter XIV, the opposite was true from at least 1921. In Le Corbusier's thought and practice, as earlier in Lethaby's, an interest in concerns about the overall environment shows through, although Le Corbusier's solutions were of an entirely different nature than Lethaby's. Whereas Lethaby's method would usually call for a process of incremental corrective improvement (what Francoise Choay has called the "culturalist model"), Le Corbusier's proposals were sweeping (Choay's "progressist model"). Le Corbusier's city planning schemes of 1922 and 1925 (the plans for the Ville Contemporaine and the Plan Voisin, respectively), and such publications as Urbanism (1925, published in English as The City of Tomorrow) provide evidence both of Le Corbusier's interest in city planning and urban problems and of the nature of his thinking on these subjects. There is a link to Lethaby in Le Corbusier's numerous efforts to solve mass housing problems but the latter's experiments with pre-fabrication (as in the design for a worker's house in 1924) would appear to go beyond (as did Gropius' proposals of this type) Lethaby's bounds of what might appropriately be achieved through standardization.

Scandinavia—Ostberg and Asplund

In Scandinavia, there existed contemporary, parallel developments to the English Arts and Crafts Movement. In Sweden this is known as the National Romantic Revival, a movement which was rooted, as far as architecture is concerned, in the teaching of an almost exact contemporary of Lethaby, I.G. Clason. Clason was teaching architecture in Sweden at roughly the same time that Lethaby was doing so in England—that is, 1890-1904 for Clason versus 1896-1911 for Lethaby. Ragnar Ostberg and Carl C. Westmann, pupils of Clason (Ostberg also worked for Clason at one time) are credited by Stuart Wrede with being principal developers of the National Romantic Revival in Swedish architecture, a movement

which drew heavily on indigenous medieval sources, especially those more in the realm of the vernacular.¹⁹³ The architectural work in the National Romantic Revival idiom shares many characteristics with the earlier-beginning English Arts and Crafts Movement, including the preoccupation with the subject matter just mentioned. The Swedish movement was, to some extent, inspired by the English Arts and Crafts but, like the work of Berlage that of the National Romantic Revival cannot be regarded as an extension of or even directly influenced by the English Movement.

By around 1910 the National Romantic Revival was virtually exhausted (a demise even earlier than that of the English Movement), Kenneth Frampton has noted, but in the ensuing return to a classicizing outlook in Swedish architecture (paralleled by similar developments in England) something of the former style's character was retained.¹⁹⁴ Frampton has noted that, like the style it supplanted, the work of this next classicizing swing in Sweden's architecture retained the older movement's interest in re-interpreting the traditional vernacular forms of the country. This characteristic shows up in Ostberg's work as that moved in a classicizing direction.¹⁹⁵ Frampton has said of such transitional work that Ostberg reconciled the "empirical delicacy" of the English Arts and Crafts house with the more monumental forms of the Swedish manor house tradition.¹⁹⁶

Wrede has noted that Ostberg and Westmann both had a significant influence on a younger Swedish architect of importance, one the same age as Gropius and Mies van der Rohe—Gunnar Asplund.¹⁹⁷ This influence made itself felt in the years 1905-09 when Asplund was a student in Stockholm at the school where Erik Lannerstrecht, another National Romantic architect who must have transmitted similar values

¹⁹³Stuart Wrede, The Architecture of Eric Gunnar Asplund (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1980), p. 1-2.

¹⁹⁴Forward by K. Frampton to Wrede's book, p. xii.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., pp. vii-viii..

¹⁹⁷Ibid, p. 2.

to Asplund, had just been named a professor.¹⁹⁸ At the end of his time of study (in 1910 actually) Asplund travelled to Germany and did so again in 1928.¹⁹⁹ Asplund could have experienced some of the residual effects of the English Movement in Germany, as manifested in such institutions as the Deutscher Werkbund and the Bauhaus. He also travelled to France, Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1928 and in the last two countries at least, depending on the nature of his architectural contacts there, some surviving components of the point of view of the earlier English Movement might have reached his attention (although not necessarily identified by him as such). On an earlier trip to the United States (1920) Asplund could have absorbed firsthand something of Wright's work (and perhaps something of the Arts and Crafts portion of it ingredients). However, his experience in England (in 1930), like Mendelsohn's and Gropius', came too late for the undiluted, original works of the Arts and Crafts there to have had much effect.

Some of Asplund's early work, however, has qualities in common with that of the English Movement. In his villa for Ivar Asplund (1911, Danderyd) the choice of materials reminds one of the English Arts and Crafts approach although some of the forms, like those of the structure's mansard roof do not. More convincing is his design for the Villa Ruth (1914) in Kuusankoski, Finland, which Wrede has said displays Asplund's mastery of the Swedish National Romantic villa mode.²⁰⁰ Asplund had at least some interaction with a Swedish organization which can be compared to the ones associated with the English Movement. He was present, Wrede has noted, at a meeting of the Swedish Arts and Crafts Society in 1935 to hear a speech by Alvar Aalto.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹⁹He also visited Belgium then.

²⁰⁰Wrede, *op.cit.*, p. 15. By 1936, as with Lethaby earlier it might be added, Asplund's interest in housing problems and his support for standardization is evident.

²⁰¹Ibid., p. 152.

Eliel Saarinen

Albert Christ-Janer, in his work on Eliel Saarinen, noted the impact of the English Arts and Crafts on the Continent in the 1880s and especially the impetus this gave to the development of Art Nouveau.²⁰² But Christ-Janer did not see a connection between the English Movement and Saarinen's point of view. There do seem to be points in common, however. For example, as with the English Arts and Crafts architects, Saarinen had an interest in utilizing the craftwork of his country in his projects. In his early days in practice, in partnerships with Gesellius and Lindgren (formed in 1896 when the three were still in school) an attempt was made to gather a staff of artisans to create furnishings to complement the firm's architectural work.²⁰³ Also, the character of the Gesellius-Lindgren-Saarinen enterprise, especially as it functioned in the early days in their studios at Hvittrask (near Helsinki) seems to have been similar in spirit to that of the Morris firm and to Lethaby's ideals of how architects and craftsmen should work together.

In Finland, there was at a similar point in time as in Sweden a National Romantic Revival and as with Sweden, similarities to the English Arts and Crafts Movement exist. The Finnish Movement, like its Swedish counterpart and the earlier English Movement, drew some of its sustenance from indigenous medieval architecture which, in Finland's case, would include the Karelian log house.²⁰⁴ A point in common between the National Romantic Movement in Finland and Lethaby's particular views (though not necessarily those of the English Arts and Crafts Movement as a whole) was the interest in trying to arrive at an architecture that would be representative of the national identity. However, Lethaby's most notable remarks on this subject come after the passing of the period of popularity of the National Romantic Movement in Finland; his comments in his influential book Architecture (1911), wherein he talked about the need of a nation to express its architectural identity in its art, can be brought up as an

²⁰² Albert Christ-Janer, Eliel Saarinen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 9. (orig. pub. in 1946). The English Movement, of course, continued to have an impact on art and architectural activity on the Continent beyond the 1880s as we know, for example, from Muthesius' publications after 1900.

²⁰³ Lindgren withdrew from the partnership in early 1905; the partnership with Gesellius was dissolved in 1907.

²⁰⁴ Christ-Janer, op.cit., p. 12.

example of his interest in this issue—one which seems to be present in his commentary throughout the next decade at least.

In the late 1890s and the early years of the following decade, Saarinen was a leader in providing architectural expression for the Finnish National Romantic Movement, so Paul Pearson has said. Pearson has described Saarinen's National Museum (1902) in Helsinki, along with Lars Sonck's cathedral (1902-07) in Tampere, as the "pinnacle" of this movement, which, like its Sweden counterpart, has certain qualities in common with the English Arts and Crafts Movement. The Movement which, incidentally, included Saarinen's partner Lindgren, among its prominent participants, was subject to the criticism of other Finnish architects who had earlier absorbed what was believed to be the more "rational" approach being taken up in some of the Western European countries to the south.²⁰⁵ At least this was the case with Saarinen's entry (that is, his personal entry as opposed to the entry submitted by the partnership) in the Helsinki Railway Station competition of 1904. For example, Sigurd Frosterus, who had worked abroad with Van de Velde, objected to the design as not being sufficiently "rational."²⁰⁶

Saarinen's home and studio at Hvittrask is the Finnish equivalent of an English Arts and Crafts work. Christ-Janer, in fact, has noted that during the phase of Saarinen's career associated with his early years at Hvittrask (the first decade of the twentieth century, at least) Saarinen responded to the progressive works of England and Scotland (i.e. the work of the Arts and Crafts for the most part) as well as those from the Continent.²⁰⁷ Another early work by Saarinen, Suur-Merijoki, a country estate near Viborg in Eastern Finland (also from 1902) possessed characteristics, as in the case of Hvittrask, which are also associated with the work of the English Movement. Three years later (1905) Saarinen and Gesellius designed the Molchow Haus, intended for construction in Germany. Because of its planned location there was an attempt to make it more compatible with that country's (and region's) architectural traditions. The resulting design shows an affinity to the Arts and Crafts in the treatment of the interiors at

²⁰⁵Paul David Pearson, *Alvar Aalto* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, N.Y., 1978), p. 12

²⁰⁶Pearson, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

²⁰⁷Christ-Janer, *op.cit.*, p. 19

least, although the house exhibited some qualities of Art Nouveau (Jugendstil) as well. The kind of hybrid work created from these two modes (for example, the work of Olbrich and Mackintosh) comes to mind.

The above-mentioned similarities to the work of the English Movement must have been partly the result of the travels that Saarinen made although the two earlier works just cited were apparently undertaken before his extensive southward journeys in Europe. However, the year before the design of the Molchow Haus Saarinen had travelled to Germany and to England and Scotland as well. While the focus of the journey was railway station design, he could have looked at Olbrich's work at Darmstadt and Mackintosh's in Glasgow and could have, during his travels in England, come in contact with Arts and Crafts architects there and seen their work, Lethaby included. Saarinen shared with Lethaby an interest in the problems of urbanism. This interest is shown in Saarinen's proposal of 1910 for the Munksnäs-Haga development near Helsinki. In 1910 also Saarinen traveled around the Continent doing city-planning research. One other connection for Saarinen with those associated with the Arts and Crafts in Britain involved the international German competition which Saarinen entered in 1904 for "A House for an Art Lover." Saarinen would logically have been interested in the other solutions, which included the entries by Baillie-Scott and Mackintosh.

Saarinen had travelled frequently in Europe in the succeeding years following the one in which he had gone abroad to study train stations. It is certain that he visited Olbrich in Darmstadt on a trip taken in 1907 which also took him to France, the Netherlands and Austria. In Austria particularly, he would have had the opportunity to come into contact with other architects of that nationality (besides Olbrich)—that is, Wagner, Loos, Hoffman—who have been discussed earlier in this chapter because of the connections that can be made between them and the English Movement. Another notable event on Saarinen's 1907 trip in the context of the present discussion was the visit he paid to Behrens, then in Dusseldorf where he was attempting to implement Muthesius' Arts and Crafts-inspired reform of the art school.²⁰⁸ More contacts were made as a result of Saarinen's invitation extended in 1908 to attend the International

²⁰⁸Christ-Janer, *op.cit.*, has said that by the time Saarinen visited Behrens, the former had already admired the latter's work for some time, p. 18.

Building Convention in Vienna, and a similar event the next year (Die Grosse Kunst Ausstellung) in Berlin. He met Hoffman in Vienna in 1911, Christ-Janer had mentioned.²⁰⁹

Other contacts with German designers influenced by the English Arts and Crafts were certainly made through Saarinen's associations with the Deutscher Werkbund. He was made a corresponding member of it in 1913 and was invited to participate in the Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne the following year. The influence of the Germans, English and Austrians on Saarinen must have been in some way reciprocal for Saarinen's work was published frequently in German periodicals, at least from 1900 on.

After Saarinen moved to the United States in 1923, a year ahead of Mendelsohn and two before Neutra, two additional connections to the Arts and Crafts Movement in England, although not of a primary order, might be mentioned. One is that the Midwest work of Wright became easily assessable to Saarinen since, after being joined by his family in New York, he came to live in the Chicago suburb of Evanston. It does not appear that Saarinen sought out Wright as Neutra and Mendelsohn had earnestly done (and as had a number of other European architects previously mentioned) but Wright did later visit Saarinen (probably after 1930) after the latter had moved to Michigan. He and Wright travelled together to Rio de Janeiro in 1930 in connection with a competition.

The Prairie School phase of Wright's career, a time when Wright was closest to the values supported by the English Arts and Crafts architects, was over (the Prairie School period as a whole was, in fact, over) by the time Saarinen arrived in the Midwest. But Wright's later work, like that done by Saarinen after he moved to the United States still showed some qualities that can be related to the English Movement. Wright must have influenced Saarinen some—and perhaps vice versa.

Saarinen's work at Cranbrook (starting with the Cranbrook School for Boys in 1925) in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, shows characteristics which are similar to the earlier work of the English Arts and Crafts and the Academy Saarinen brought into being at Cranbrook, in its structure as an educational institution,

²⁰⁹Christ-Janer, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

can be related to Lethaby's much earlier London Central School (and the later German school which also owed a debt to the LCC and Lethaby's ideas on education, the famous Bauhaus).

Alvar Aalto

It was mentioned earlier that Saarinen's partner Lindgren, like Saarinen himself, was an important participant in the National Romantic Revival Movement, a circumstance which would seem to offer the most legitimate basis for bringing up this architect's name in the present discussion.²¹⁰ Worth noting in the context of looking at possible connections between the English Movement and Aalto is the personal attention Lindgren gave the latter during Aalto's student days in Helsinki. This becomes of interest when one remembers the kind of arts and crafts-related outlook Lindgren must have had as a proponent in the National Romantic Revival. In Aalto's architectural training in Helsinki, he also studied under Sigurd Frosterus whose connections to Henri Van de Velde, who also had links to the English Arts and Crafts, have been noted previously.

The impact of English Arts and Crafts works themselves, via publications, would not have amounted to much in Aalto's case, one would think, as the Movement in England had already fallen into eclipse by the time Aalto had completed his professional training. It cannot be stated when Aalto first travelled to England where he might have seen Arts and Crafts work first-hand and met their creators; he did exhibit his work in London in 1933, but if he travelled to England in connection with this he would have been too late to meet Lethaby.

The influence on Aalto of Frank Lloyd Wright, a source, for some, of values associated with the Arts and Crafts, as has been previously noted, would have had to come in a period later than the one in which Wright had his major impact on European architecture in European countries south of Finland. The first opportunity that Aalto had to see Wright's work first-hand (both the earlier work more closely linked to the English Movement and that which came later) was in 1938 when he made his first trip to the United States. One interesting direct link to Lethaby himself, however, involved Aalto's belief that a rational

²¹⁰Pearson, *op.cit.*, p. 12, has called Lindgren one of the Movement's chief proponents.

approach to architecture should not be narrowly-defined. This is similar to Lethaby's expanded view of "function" in architecture. Like Lethaby also, Aalto was interested in problems of large-scale housing. One could cite as evidence of this interest by Aalto, the Tapani Apartments (1929) in Turku from his first year of practice and later, his designs for multiple housing at Kauttua.

Aalto did have contact with arts and crafts organizations in Scandinavia, however, as is proven by his speech (already noted) to the Swedish Arts and Crafts Society in 1935. In Aalto's work, some buildings show an arts and crafts orientation. His early two-story, multi-family house (1923) in Jyväskylä, where he opened (in the same year) his first architectural office, is of this type.²¹¹ The following year, Aalto designed what Pearson has described as an English-type garden apartment (to be used as railway employee housing) of the kind introduced in Germany through Muthesius.²¹² This type of garden apartment, Pearson has observed, had appeared in magazines Aalto could have seen as a student in Helsinki.²¹³ Pearson has maintained that this work indicates Aalto's understanding of the phase of the Deutscher Werkbund (Pearson describes it as the early phase) which is most definitively linked to the work of English Arts and Crafts architects.²¹⁴ Many of Aalto's later works, even his town hall complex at Saynatsalo (from 1950) for example, also show, like some of Eliel Saarinen's late churches in the United States from the 1940s, the persistence of characteristics which can be associated with the Arts and Crafts.

Russia

Several possible sources of influence of the English Arts and Crafts on Russian architectural activity can be noted. Of the most direct kind, it can be observed that Mackintosh came to Moscow in

²¹¹Pearson has written that Jyväskylä was Aalto's hometown; Leonardo Mosso, in Hatje's *Encyclopedia*, p. 28, gives it as Kuortane.

²¹²Pearson, *op.cit.*, p. 25. Pearson mentioned here, in particular, the names of Philip Webb (Lethaby's mentor) and Voysey.

²¹³*Ibid.*

²¹⁴*Ibid*, fn. 7 on p. 227.

1903 to exhibit his work and in the process, met with a number of Russian architects.²¹⁵ By this time, Lethaby's account of Morris was read by at least by one prominent Russian, the author Tolstoi and no doubt by others in that country. Whole delegations of Russians, Frederick Starr has written, visited the English Garden City settlements (from at least 1909). These projects no doubt included Letchworth, in whose planning Lethaby had tried to participate, as shown in the submittal of an entry in a related competition. It has been noted that these English garden settlements were populated with the Arts and Crafts designs of such architects as Parker, Unwin, Ricardo, and Lutyens. The influence of the Russians who had gone to view all this certainly must have carried over in the discussions and activities of the Russian branch (founded 1913) of the International Garden City Association. Also among connections to be made between Russian work and the English Arts and Crafts approach involves the design of a model multi-family dwelling by the Russian architect [K.] Melnikov (known principally for his later Constructivist activities), designed in 1920 and to be constructed of wood by peasant craftsmen.

The Arts and Crafts qualities of Wright's early work also penetrated Russia. Moisei Ginsburg studied Wright's works, as presented in the Wasmuth editions, while in Milan before World War I and by 1912 Golosov had built his own version, Starr has observed, of Wright's Hickox House (Kankakee, Illinois) near St. Petersburg.²¹⁶

Architects of Germany, Austria, and Belgium who have been connected in the discussion previously to the influence of the English Arts and Crafts had an effect in Russia as well. A work of St. Petersburg engineer V. Apytikov, Ratsionalnoe v novoi arkhitekture (Rational and New Architecture, published in 1905) included sections on Muthesius, Wagner, Van de Velde, and Horta. Starr has noted that the Russian architectural press in general, at that time was significantly affected by the work of such

²¹⁵The majority of the observations offered here on connections between the English Arts and Crafts and Russian architectural developments are dependent on information obtained via Frederick Starr's work on Melnikov (Melnikov, Solo Architect in a Mass Society, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.)

²¹⁶Starr, op.cit., p. 23.

progressive architects as these just named.²¹⁷ Ginsburg, for one, before World War I, had been studying, first hand, recent German architecture. Olbrich, like Mackintosh, had come to exhibit in Moscow in 1903 and found a major disciple, Starr has written, in the St. Petersburg architect, Vasiliev. Muthesius' associate Behrens had designed the German embassy in St. Petersburg some years later (1911-12), although this work shows little or nothing of Arts and Crafts provenance.²¹⁸ Mies van de Rohe had come to Russia to supervise the construction of the embassy on Behrens' behalf.

Later, but still in Lethaby's lifetime, those who have been contributors to significant architectural activities in Germany that can be linked to the Bauhaus (and further back, to the Deutscher Werkbund, Muthesius and Lethaby) also reached into the Russian sphere. Marcel Breuer, who had been a prominent teacher at the Bauhaus at Dessau designed a theatre for the city of Kharkov in 1930 and later Mendelsohn also travelled to Russia, in 1925.²¹⁹ The year of Lethaby's death (1931), Gropius and Poelzig (as well as Mendelsohn) entered the competition for the Palace of the Soviets (to be built in Moscow). Non-Germans, brought up in the context of the foregoing discussion, who were involved in Russian work (or at least proposals for it) included Mart Stam, a collaborator with the Russian El Lissitsky (Eliezer Markovich) in 1924 for example, and Le Corbusier, who traveled to Russia in 1928 and 1929 (and also entered the Palace of the Soviets competition in 1931.²²⁰ Of course, the work involved in later projects mentioned, like the competition for the Palace of the Soviets, bears little or no resemblance to that of the Arts and Crafts and relates to Lethaby's theory only in a very general way—in the sense that: 1) some of these architects (Gropius, Poelzig, Breuer, and Mies Van der Rohe had participated in educational systems which bore the effects of Lethaby's earlier efforts in this area; 2) these men had tried, as Lethaby had advocated, to make architecture the beneficiary of recent knowledge in the various fields of science

²¹⁷Ibid.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹They had both been stationed earlier (1917) with the German army on the Russian front in World War I.

²²⁰El Lissitsky had studied at the Technical College in Darmstadt 1909-1914 and had exhibited at the 1927 Werkbund exhibition.

and had tried to produce a practical architecture (or claimed to); 3) had eschewed designing in the historic styles as Lethaby himself had insisted, and; 4) had, in line with Lethaby's later view at least, accepted the utilization of modern materials like concrete and iron products as legitimate building materials.

After Lethaby

The foregoing pages have concentrated on looking at architecture that had developed in England and at various locations on the Continent and elsewhere in the context of discussing the possible impact on this of Lethaby's theory and that of the Arts and Crafts generally. The influence of Lethaby's theory on later developments is, as with that of the English Arts and Crafts as a whole, even more difficult to gauge and more diffuse in character than on that of his own period. In the later work of Wright, Saarinen and Aalto, for example, some of the qualities which connected the earlier work of these men to the principles of the Arts and Crafts (a value placed on craftsmanship, for example) are apparent at least, at times. Aalto and Neutra developed an enlarged view of the meaning of functionalism in architecture and that can be related to Lethaby's outlook. Some of the later versions of Wright's Usonian house retain some of the features of the earlier Prairie School work, with its Arts and Crafts connections. The emergence and evolution of the generic Ranch-style house in the United States had its roots in Wright's Arts and Crafts-related Prairie School idiom and in the aspect of the ranch house's informal but logical arrangement of spaces, can be connected to the early work of the English Movement.

Among other connections, it might be noted that in Germany, up until their fall from power at the end of the Second World War, the National Socialists encouraged a variant of earlier "traditional" architecture (for residential purposes) which had ties to earlier Arts and Crafts work. The German variant of Arts and Crafts work had been stimulated, as noted earlier, by the related English developments. Also, in roughly the same time period, architectural work called Art Deco (in its various states, including the "Moderne," and occurring on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere) showed the kind of willingness to experiment with building materials, including new ones such as synthetic products (including plastics)

that Lethaby said should occur, even though he would be certain to reject these new-found expressions as just more “styles.”

In some later activities related to architectural education, at places like Wright’s Taliesin and Saarinen’s Cranbrook Academy, there was a stress on principles which had been dear to Lethaby, such as the commitment to learning by doing, and to providing architects-in-training with a background in other artistic activities besides those considered, traditionally, the province of the architect. Also, at Cranbrook at least, there was the attempt to integrate the architect’s training with that of those pursuing allied artistic achievements.

Among later developments, one could also cite the methods of Paolo Soleri in the Southwest United States as another example of the artistic community in which architectural activity is interwoven with other artistic ventures. In Soleri’s Arizona community, Arcosanti, also, there is the commitment to learn by doing and to involving the designer in the actual building process, as Lethaby believed was desirable. Also, relating to Arts and Crafts-linked educational ventures in Europe, one could mention the attempt to establish a “New Bauhaus” in Chicago after conditions in Germany made it impossible to continue the old one. In the architectural schools at American universities, as in those of a number of other countries, the model of the École des Beaux Arts was gradually abandoned in the decades after Lethaby’s death. This process included the rejection of the École’s bias towards a design approach based on classical values and, instead, the acceptance of more of the education features held in common with schools like the Arts and Crafts-influenced Bauhaus. Science, which Lethaby believed important in architectural education from the early years of the twentieth century, began to receive more emphasis in architectural programs.

Intensity of Lethaby’s Influence at Various Times

Looking back over the preceding discussion about what architectural activities in the British Isles, on the Continent and in the United States that Arts and Crafts principles (and Lethaby’s specifically) might have touched, a few more general observations about the impact of Lethaby can be offered. One is that, in the first period in which Lethaby could be considered influential—from the time he helped found

the Art Worker's Guild (1884) to his appointment to the principalship (1896) of the London Central School—Lethaby's personal influence would seem to have been a factor mainly on the domestic scene, principally through his involvement in various Arts and Crafts-oriented organizations. Of course, in this period, the potency of the English Movement in aggregate was already making itself felt abroad, through publications and the foreign travels of some of the group's members.

The next period of Lethaby's career—1896 until the mid-point of the second decade of the twentieth century (mid-way through World War I approximately)—was probably the one in which Lethaby's influence was strongest both domestically and abroad. His range of influence during this time increased primarily through contact with Muthesius and possibly through Behrens and Wagner. In this period, in his own country, his stature as an educator grew through his involvement with the London Central School and the Royal College of Art. In this period also came Lethaby's most active role in contributing to the R.I.B.A., as an advisor on educational policies. His stature as a scholar also grew and in matters relating to preservation he assumed a more leading role in the SPAB and received the appointment as Surveyor at Westminster Abbey. One of Lethaby's most influential books, Architecture (1911), was published in this period also and the most innovative work of his own architectural practice occurred, especially the Brockhampton church. At the end of this period Lethaby helped found England's first Werkbund-inspired institution, the Design and Industries Association.

Lethaby's personal impact abroad was greatest during the period beginning in 1896 when Muthesius published in German media information and favorable comment about Lethaby's architectural works along with that about other prominent English Arts and Crafts architects. Muthesius personally conveyed to other Germans the progressive ideas manifesting themselves in English educational institutions relating to the field of architecture, beginning with information about the one at which Lethaby served as Principal. It was during this time, also, that Lethaby's trips to the Continent, especially to Germany, involved a focusing of his interest on modern architectural issues as opposed to those of a more historical nature.

In the last phase of Lethaby's career, from 1915 or so until his death, his stature continued to grow both at home and abroad in some circles but the range of direct influence seems to have shrunk back slowly more to the size of the British Isles. Of course, the impact he had had earlier outside of England (both directly and more anonymously as a leader of the Arts and Crafts Movement) remained part of the foundation of the later evolution of modern architecture, especially in German developments (including Gropius' educational activities) and in the United States (for example, in Wright's works).

Many participants of the Arts and Crafts Movement saw their careers changed for the worse as a result of the disruptive effects of the First World War although some of the architects earlier associated with the movement managed to survive. The Arts and Crafts as a movement, however, essentially ended as a result of the conditions the war produced, but Lethaby retained his potency as an authoritative figure in English architectural circles in the post-war period, although his architectural practice which he had, in fact, given up much earlier (a few years after the turn of the century) was not a factor in this.

From the late 'teens, Lethaby's indirect influence, despite the eminence that he achieved in his own country, seems to have been more profound abroad, based on the effect that the English Movements had in later architectural developments which took place in Europe and the United States—that is, the phenomenon of a massive, but slowly evolving change in the way architectural activity and education was to be approached. In England, the volume of Arts and Crafts-related architectural activity at the height of this movement was only a small percentage compared to the work executed in the idioms of “style” revivals but Lethaby lived long enough to see the potency of the Arts and Crafts Movement, at least as far as actual practice was concerned, diminish to nothing—save for the respect accorded his own opinions and a few of the other participants.

General Comments by Others (Contemporary and Later) Relating to Lethaby and His Influence

Some comments by others, first from Lethaby's own time and then from later, are next offered on the subject of his influence. His friend Lawrence Weaver was already quite impressed with both Lethaby's design and writing talents in 1905 when he wrote, in the first volume of The Lesser Country

Houses of Today, that Lethaby “is one of the few men living who can at once create real architecture and write about the subject of his preoccupation in luminous fashion.”²²¹ Some years later, Dr. Machail, Morris’ biographer, in a laudatory passage offered as part of a celebration for Lethaby (his 65th birthday) noted the large number of areas in which Lethaby had distinguished himself and also called attention to his impact on others:

For nearly half a century, you have [addressing Lethaby], as a scholar and craftsman and as a teacher and expouser of the mistress art of architecture and its ancillary arts of design, exercised a quickening influence on the theory and practice of those who, as comrades and pupils, have accompanied or followed you in the same path.²²²

Even his sometime antagonist, Maxwell Aylwin, set his argument the next year in the following terms, which recognized both Lethaby’s abilities as a historian of architecture and as a writer on contemporary architectural issues:

Of all modern writers upon architecture, there are few who can claim, as a right, such attention as can Professor Lethaby. We have many professors who have added to our knowledge of the past, and he is with them, and no mean comrade. But he is no mere archaeologist, for having looked long and thoroughly into the past he has faced about and now looks ahead with equal patience and thought, thereby gaining double status of authority.²²³

Among other contemporary comments on Lethaby which show the regard in which he was held is the one offered by his friend, disciple and fellow architect, Francis Troup (1859-1941).²²⁴ For Lethaby’s obituary in the R.I.B.A. Journal (August, 1931), Troup wrote: “Awe is the only word that expressed my feeling for his almost boundless artistic and archaeological knowledge...”²²⁵ Lethaby’s friend from

²²¹Weaver, op.cit., p. 98.

²²²“Presentation to Professor Lethaby,” The Builder, 27 Jan., 1922, p. 153.

²²³G. Maxwell Aylwin, letter to The Builder, publ. 3 Aug., 1923, p. 178.

²²⁴Troup had entered the Liverpool Cathedral competition as one of Lethaby’s partners, he later designed the Art Worker’s Guild premises in Queen Square, London.

²²⁵From 8 Aug., 1931, op.cit., p. 697.

academia, Sydney Cockerell, thought of him, according to Wilfrid Blunt, as a deity—“one to be worshipped as well as loved.”²²⁶ The Architecture and Building News in their obituary for Lethaby in July, 1931, mentioned Lethaby’s “immense reputation among architects of his own time.”²²⁷ Further, in the obituary, in a remark which called to notice his integrative outlook, it was said:

In truth, he dwelt in an Olympus of his own creation, from which he viewed the architectural world steadily and as a whole. His right to this position was unquestioned. His eminence lay in the fact that he was the inspiration and the accepted mentor of his generation (in England).²²⁸

From later times, there is, for example, the comment by Noel Rooke, writing in 1950: “He [Lethaby] has had more influence on world thought in architecture than any other Englishman.”²²⁹ The 1970s brought more comments on Lethaby’s importance of a type which do not so much disturb the premise that Lethaby’s architectural contribution was quite significant but to suggest what the nature of the contribution was not. Robert Macleod observed in 1971 (in Style and Society) that Lethaby had little direct influence but this, as noted earlier, would be consistent with the nature of Lethaby’s contribution. Macleod does not balance his commentary with additional remarks about Lethaby’s more important indirect influence.²³⁰ Stephen Bayley, in 1975, speaking only of Lethaby’s impact in England over the long term, was also relatively unsanguine in writing: “Unhappily (if you’re a modernist by persuasion,

²²⁶Wilfred Blunt, Cockerell (Sydney Carlyle Cockerell), (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1965), p. 69.

²²⁷“William Richard Lethaby,” 24 July, 1931, p. 96.

²²⁸*Ibid.*

²²⁹Noel Rooke, “The Works of Lethaby, Webb and Morris,” RIBA Journal, 21 Feb., 1950, p 175.

²³⁰Macleod, op.cit., 1971, p. 67.

that is) Lethaby's philosophy of architecture did not really become popular in England."²³¹ However, Peter Davey, in 1980, characterized Lethaby as the most articulate spokesman of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the generation after Morris and one who, Davey said, provided during his period of prominence, a "mirror" of the Movement's development.²³²

Davey also suggested, in the book just mentioned, in an otherwise generally complimentary passage, that Lethaby "became one of the betrayers of the Gospel of Ruskin and Morris."²³³ Seemingly somewhat at odds with this assertion, a bit further on (but on the same page), Davey suggested that it would be "unfair to suggest that Lethaby was the Iscariot of the Arts and Crafts Movement."²³⁴ But, since the character of the Arts and Crafts Movement did change some during its development, Davey may be able legitimately to make the point that Lethaby "betrayed" (although another word may be more appropriate) those upon whose thinking the Movement rested (at least in some respects) without being judged guilty of betraying the Movement itself. Less easy to accept is Davey's suggestion found in another part of the previously mentioned statement about Morris and Ruskin, that Lethaby's betrayal can be associated with his tendency to temporize. This gives the wrong idea about the firmness of Lethaby's convictions. While Lethaby, as Davey has noted, could exhibit empathy for widely varying points of view and accord them a sympathetic hearing, the evidence suggests that he did not abandon his positions on issues easily.

²³¹Stephen Bayley, "W R Lethaby and the Cell of Tradition," *RIBA Journal*, April, 1975, pp. 29-30. Reyner Banham, in 1960, similarly bemoaned the fate of the Arts and Crafts Movement. He wrote, bringing up also the waxing enthusiasm for the classic, that English Free Architecture (of which the Arts and Crafts was a major part) was reduced (before its actual extinction) "to a mere provincial vernacular, in competition with a provincial version of Beaux-Arts classicizing..." Banham described this turn of events as "a singular example of failure of nerve and collapse of creative energy" (*op.cit.*, 1975 printing, p. 47). John Brandon-Jones suggested that Lethaby's influence in England was greater later rather than earlier, stating that he was ignored in his own country until Le Corbusier's and Gropius' thought was translated into English (from "The Architect Who Turned Teacher," *The Listener*, 22 Jan., 1948, p. 147. This last observation may refer to a resurgence of appreciation for Lethaby, following a period of eclipse, in the years following his death.

²³²Davey, p. 66. Like Banham (see previous footnote), Davey referred also here (same page) to the decline in potency of the Movement, stating that Lethaby's later essays were a reflection of a revolution which had lost its impetus.

²³³*Ibid.*

²³⁴*Ibid.*

Exception can be taken to Davey's remarks (in the place already cited) that Lethaby's shift during his career to a diminished involvement (and finally none at all) in actual architectural practice can be associated with his betrayal (or perhaps abandonment) of the principles of the Arts and Crafts as they originally were constituted. As Davey put this, as Lethaby "became more and more divorced from the realities of ordinary building, his theories became increasingly opposed to many of the original Arts and Crafts ideals."²³⁵ This seems to put forth a spurious reason for the departures which Lethaby did make from the original, orthodox Arts and Crafts point view which is unhelpful to a further degree by the subsequent omission of any further discussion of why Lethaby reasonably may have changed his mind on certain issues.

More Specific Comments by Others on the Quality of Lethaby's Practice and on His Influence on Other Practitioners

A few more specific comments about Lethaby's significance (including some about his practice) might be added here to the more general ones already offered. Much earlier than Banham and Bayley, Lethaby's Arts and Crafts colleague, Ashbee, in remarking upon the founding of the English Arts and Crafts Movement (and the effect of the Movement abroad), mentioned Lethaby's work as part of an acknowledgement of the high quality of the English Movement's architectural output. To support his comments from 1917 that the Movement "left a few fine examples in a small way," Ashbee added in a footnote: "The early of work of Lutyens could be cited, or the work of Lethaby, Prior, Detmar Blow, Ricardo, Cecil Brewer and one or two others."²³⁶ Lethaby's production within the small overall output of English Arts and Crafts-related architecture was small itself but Nikolaus Pevsner's later comments as to the quality of Lethaby's built work is in accord with Ashbee's perception: "Lethaby built little...[but]

²³⁵Ibid.

²³⁶C.R. Ashbee, *Where the Great City Stands* (1917), *op.cit.*, p. 19.

what he built is without exception outstanding in quality and character.”²³⁷ In another, more recent source, Service’s Edwardian Architecture (previously cited), there appears another, piece of testimony as to the power of Lethaby’s architecture. As part of the description in the book of the Euston Road Fire Station (1901-02) in London is offered the following: “It is on a level with the work of Webb, Mackintosh or Lethaby at their stern best...”²³⁸

David Martin, in his 1957 thesis on Lethaby, noted the English architects whom he thought bore the mark of Lethaby’s influence. The list included the Barnsley brothers (Ernest and Sidney), Ernest Gimson, Guy Dauber, Detmar Blow, Halsey Ricardo, Gerald Horsley, Dunbar Smith, Cecil Brewer, M.H. Baillie-Scott, Edwin Lutyens, and William Bidlake.²³⁹ Additionally, Martin observed that the influence of Lethaby was also felt in “much of the early work of the London County Council Architect’s Department and that of the London School Board.”²⁴⁰ Lethaby’s influence can also be detected, Martin noted, in the new housing estates which were built in Lethaby’s time around London, such as those on Webber Row and on Boundary Road, and in the designs of the fire stations on Euston Road (recently mentioned) and at

²³⁷Nikolaus Pevsner, “Richard Norman Shaw,” a chapter in Edwardian Architecture and its Origins (1975); Pevsner’s contribution dates originally from c. 1940-41 but was updated for inclusion in this later work (1975) ed. and with contributions by Alistair Service. (Whether Pevsner’s comment on Lethaby dates from the original time has not been determined.)

²³⁸Service, op.cit. p. 409. (Chapter titled “The Architect’s Department of the London County Council 1888-1914”) Martin in his thesis (op.cit.) noted that the period of Lethaby’s own practice closest in time to the production of this Fire Station was his “most progressive period” (op.cit., p. 66)—a period that included the Eagle Insurance Building, the Brockhampton Church and his involvement in the design for the Liverpool Cathedral competition. In this period, a time when Lethaby recognized the need for twentieth century engineering and continuing experimentation, Martin wrote, the ideas of Webb and Shaw were replaced with his own ideas. Peter Davey has remarked that the earlier shift in Lethaby’s architectural practice, from an orientation linked to Shaw to one more connectable to Webb, is shown by looking at his first two independent works—Avon Tyrell, representing the influence of Shaw and “Four Oaks” (Birmingham), reflecting Webb’s influence. This is apparent, Davey has noted, in Lethaby’s approach to the working out of the plans and, as shown in his third commission, Melsetter House, a concern, which can be linked to Webb, for trying to link the architectural design with the existing local building tradition. (Davey, op.cit., pp. 60 and 62.)

²³⁹Martin, op.cit., p. 118. The two principals of the Birmingham firm of Bateman and Bateman were also listed, as was an architect named Worthington who is not familiar to this author. (Service, Edwardian Architecture—A Handbook..., 1977, op.cit., p. 130), also mentioned that the Batemans were admirers of Lethaby.

²⁴⁰Ibid.

St. John's Wood.²⁴¹ In Service's 1975 work (previously cited), in a caption for an illustration of the London County Council Architect's Department's Hogarth House (started in 1899, Erasmus Street, Westminster), another acknowledgement of Lethaby's effect (along with that of some others) on built work is found. The caption reads: "The influence of Philip Webb, Lethaby and perhaps Holden is already evident."²⁴² As to the influence of Lethaby's work on the architectural products of Muthesius across the Channel, Godfrey Rubens has commented that the German architect wrote that "each of Lethaby's houses was a masterpiece, and they certainly influenced his own work."²⁴³

An important place for the architects involved in the work of the Architect's Department and that of the School Board to meet with Lethaby (and Webb, another influence), Martin has noted, was at meetings of the SPAB.²⁴⁴ Some of the architects concerned with the London-area projects just mentioned must also have been pupils of Lethaby in formal academic contexts, as at the London Central School. Another important pupil, besides those already mentioned, was E.W. Tristram who succeeded Lethaby in his position at the Royal College of Art and held this spot for the long interval beginning with Lethaby's departure from the post in 1918, until 1948.

In the observations of others it has not always been Lethaby's teaching activity in London or the products of his practice which have been singled out as the key elements of his influence. Certainly his ideas as expressed in his writings must have affected many more and this has been noticed by various observers. Kenneth Frampton has noted that Lethaby's Architecture, Mysticism and Myth had a significant impact on one of the most important Scottish architects to be linked with the Arts and Crafts Movement, Mackintosh. Frampton has observed that Mackintosh, in this book by Lethaby, found a

²⁴¹Ibid.

²⁴²Op.cit., p. 407, in the chapter by Service titled "The Architect's Department of the London County Council, 1884-1914." In the introductory caption for the chapter, Service also stated that most of the young architects in the period up to 1899 who worked in the London County Council Architect's Department were architectural disciples "to lesser or greater degree" of Lethaby and Webb. (Ibid., p. 406.)

²⁴³"William Lethaby's Buildings," a chapter in Service's book from 1975, op.cit., p. 133. John Brandon-Jones (op.cit., 1948, p. 147) noted that Lethaby was a trail blazer for the Scandinavians, Dutch, Austrians and Germans.

²⁴⁴Ibid.

discussion of architectural symbolism, based on metaphysics, written not by someone remote from his own circumstances but a fellow architectural practitioner who shared common values—and thus, a book of lasting usefulness:

Throughout Mackintosh's unique and highly influential development, Lethaby's Architecture, Mysticism and Myth of 1892 [orig. 1891] was to serve as an important catechism—not only because it revealed the universal metaphysical basis of all architectural symbolism but also because, coming from Lethaby's hand, it formed a bridge between the other-worldliness of Celtic mysticism and the more pragmatic Arts and Crafts approach to the creation of form.²⁴⁵

Davey also has noted the influence of the same volume on a building by one of Lethaby's disciples Robert Schultz-Weir, the Khartoum Cathedral (1906-28). This building, Davey has said, was “carefully executed on the principle of Lethaby's “Cosmos” a nickname Lethaby has for his book.”²⁴⁶ The importance of Lethaby's thinking has also been acknowledged by the eminent American writer on architecture (amongst other topics), Lewis Mumford. At the beginning of one of Mumford's most influential early works on architecture, Sticks and Stones (initially published in 1924) appears a quotation from Lethaby: “Architecture, properly understood, is civilization itself.”²⁴⁷

Summary

In this appendix, divided into three basic parts, there has been offered a discussion on the influence of Lethaby's theory. The first part contained some general comments centering on such questions related to the nature of Lethaby's influence as, for example, whether his influence was essentially “direct” or “indirect” (and what these terms mean in the sense applied) and how (by what means) his influence made itself felt. The key point in this first part was that Lethaby's main impact was indirect, exercised through the influence generally of the English Arts and Crafts Movement rather than direct (attributable to

²⁴⁵Frampton, op.cit., pp. 74-75.

²⁴⁶Davey, op.cit., p. 110.

²⁴⁷Op.cit. (New York: Dover Paperback, 1955), on a page before the Preface appearing with only one other short quote by Matthew Arnold. The quotation seems to have been present from the very first edition, in 1924.

Lethaby personally). The organizations in which Lethaby was active have been cited as the main vehicles through which his influence was exerted although (in the second part of this discussion) specific personal contacts (some of them quite important, as in the case of Muthesius) are also mentioned.

The second part of the chapter (comprising most of it) addressed the question of Lethaby's influence on the thought and practice of specific architects (grouped according to their country of origin). In this part, Lethaby's effect on the architectural activities of his own time was explored since his influence on later work is reasoned to be of a more diluted nature and more difficult to define. Also (in this part of the chapter) emphasis has been put on Lethaby's possible influence on architecture in other countries, although some comment about Lethaby's effect domestically is also offered. The latter subject is, however, the principal focus of the third (final) part of the chapter. In the discussion focusing on other countries, comments were offered in some instances about the impact of the English Arts and Crafts generally on the architectural activity in a specific country, and in others about more specific connections that could be made between the English Arts and Crafts personalities (including Lethaby) and architectural work in the country in question), and sometimes both. The discussion, as just described, was undertaken in an effort to suggest, in the absence of having available as much specific data as desired about Lethaby relevant to the topic at hand, the extent of the contribution that he made through the English Movement in which he played such a prominent role.

The various sections of the second part of the chapter dealing with the influence of the English Arts and Crafts (and of Lethaby) on selected architects yielded that these architects could be linked to the English Movement by virtue of one or more of eight factors. In some cases, only one of these factors seems to have been relevant; in a few others all seem to be, while the majority involves some number in between. The three strongest factors seem to be as follows: (1) the ones involving Muthesius, who brought about educational reform in Germany (thus affecting such noteworthy architects as Behrens and Poelzig) and the establishment of the Werkbund (with connections to a diverse array of German and Austrian architects as well as prominent figures from other countries (like Le Corbusier, Van de Velde and Eliel Saarinen); (2) influence by people who were inspired by the Arts and Crafts (but not part of it)

who had a great deal of influence in their own right such as Wright, Berlage, Behrens and Wagner; and (3) influence stemming from coverage of British Arts and Crafts work in available publications, both those English and in other languages. In the second foregoing factor familiarity with the Arts and Crafts Movement and its principles was transmitted, by personal contact and/or through the publication of the work of the architects. In Wright's case, for example, Arts and Crafts ideas were transmitted by both these means to other Midwestern American architects under his influence (and to receptive designers in Europe) through personal contact and through publications. Wright had an impact on architectural activity on the west coast of the United States through the exposure his work there received, through publications and more indirectly, through some of his Midwestern associates who came to work in California. The printed sources referred to in factor (3) affected American architects from coast to coast and in a number of the countries of Europe as well.

Other factors which affected some of the architects brought up in this chapter (five more) involve: (4) the presence overseas by architects from Great Britain associated with the Arts and Crafts through timely visits like that of Ashbee to Chicago, through the commissioning of these architects to do overseas work, as was the case with Baillie-Scott at Darmstadt or through the exhibits of their work abroad, as in the case of Olbrich's in such places as St. Louis and Moscow); (5) patronage (looking at overseas commissions from the other viewpoint) by those on the Continent (such as Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig and Karl Osthaus) who encouraged the kind of work that is related to the English Arts and Crafts; and (6) visits to the British Isles by various foreigners (including architects who were to have an impact on future architectural developments in their own countries). These foreigners who came to Britain to learn about the progressive art schools and arts and crafts organizations which had evolved in England and Scotland around the turn of the twentieth century (as well as the visits with the architects there who were ideologically linked with the English Movement and direct exposure to their work) might very well have come into contact with Lethaby. In addition to the certainty of Lethaby's contact with Muthesius, it was pointed out that there was a reasonable possibility that such important Continental architects as Behrens,

Olbrich, Hoffman, Loos and Saarinen may have met Lethaby in England. This holds true also of American Arts and Crafts-related figures Stickley and Hubbard.

Another factor (7) has to do with the influence exerted by those whose relationship to the Arts and Crafts appears to be of a more secondary nature, with people like Gropius and Mies van der Rohe in Germany and Oud in Holland who had acquired some Arts and Crafts-related ideas through association with individuals and groups whose contact with this Movement had been more direct. Finally, one more mode of influence (8) really only a mode of interrelationship, concerns the practice and influence of architects pursuing ideas parallel to but not necessarily derived from the English Arts and Crafts. Architects like Wagner in Austria and the architects of the National Romantic Revival in Scandinavia could be brought up in this context although all of these, to varying degrees, may also have been influenced directly by the English Movement.

APPENDIX B

LETHABY'S WORK IN THE VISUAL ARTS
(with Selected Biographical Entries Interspersed)

- 1857 William Richard Lethaby born Jan. 18, 1857 (Ward); Ward Times Lit. Suppl.: 1855.
- from 1862 Lived at Ebberley Lawn, Barnstaple. (age 5+)
- 1860s, Attended Barnstaple School of Art (Pilton, Devonshire).
1870s
- c. 1869 By age of 12 won first of many prizes at art school operated under the auspices of the Barnstaple Literary and Scientific Institute.
- 1870 Lethaby's mother died. (Ward)
- c. 1871 Articled +/- age 14 to Alexander Lauder. (possibly 1873)
- 1873 Won prizes at Barnstaple School of Art.
- 1876 Perspective of a London chapel by Lauder publ. 8 April, The Architect. Drawn and signed by Lethaby.
- 1877 Left Barnstaple and Lauder's office. (Ward: Feb. 1878, just after age 21; Martin: 1876; Roberts: at age 21, in 1878 left for Duffield.)
- 1877 "A Cemetery Chapel" publ. in the Building News, 8 Feb. (Designing Club?), 2 elevations, section, plan.
- 1877 A Fireplace design by Lethaby publ. in Building News, vol. 32, 23 Feb., p. 192 and 199. (Designing Club competition). Design took 2nd place; section, elevation, plan.
- 1877 "A Mountain Chapel" publ. in Building News, vol. 32, 1 June. (Designing Club). Took 1st place in competition; elevation, plan, perspective.
- 1877 "Lodge and Covered Entrance" publ. in Building News, vol 33., 3 Aug., p. 100 and 106. (Designing Club) Took second place; plan, perspective, elevation.
- 1877 Hall fireplace design (with projecting hood). Building News, vol. 33, 26 Dec., p. 675. (Design Club) Took first place; elevation, perspective, three details.
- 1877 Lethaby's "A Country House Porch," publ. in vol. 32, 23 March, Building News, pp. 290 and 299.
- 1878 Began work in office of Richard Waite in Duffield, suburb of Derby. (May have begun late Nov., 1878 or early Jan., 1879.)
- 1878 Some of Lethaby's illustrations from Designing Club contest pub. in Building News, vol. 34, 19 April, p. 349 (although contest already over). a) fender, fire irons, incl. shovel, fire irons, coal scuttle. Elev of fender included; b) foliated hinges for a church (wrought iron)

- 1870s Design for a font (1877 or 1878); publ. in Building News (Designing Club competition entry)
- 1878 Received an award from the Barnstaple School of Art for a design publ. in Building News (Designing Club competition).
- 1878 Lethaby applied to enter William Butterfield's architectural office. Is not successful.
- c. 1878 Lethaby involved in Bedford Park projects of R.N. Shaw from c. 1878. Lethaby involved in designs for stores, a house, and an inn in Hounslow, 1878-80.
- 1878 Perspective of R.N. Shaw's #68 Cadogan Square done by Lethaby.
- 1879 Was in Leicester, a few months in early 1879.
- 1879 Mid-March (March 12): back to Duffield until early Aug 5 1879 (dep. for London).
- 1879 "House for a Learned Society" publ. in Building News, 4 April. Soane Medallion winning entry (Lethaby joined Shaw's office after winning Soane Fellowship: Times Lit. Suppl.)
- 1879 Lethaby joined Shaw's staff as principal assistant.
- 1879 A number of Lethaby's sketches of medieval subjects around Derby publ. in Building News. Lethaby's drawing of a Jacobean house in Derby, Building News, 14 Feb.
- 1879- R.N. Shaw's Albert Hall Mansions w/ ext. persp. signed by Lethaby (publ. in The Builder
1881 1879); Front block, 1876-7; new plans and elevations, 1879-81; west bldg: des. 1882, exec. 1883-4; east block, des. 1884, exec. 1885-6; (Also pub. in Building News 1879 or 1881). Another source in Building News: Lethaby involved in the design from 1879.
- 1879 R.N. Shaw's #9-11 Chelsea Embankment; floor plans and persp. of street front drawn by Lethaby, 1879
- 1879 R.N. Shaw's #49 Prince's Gate, Westminster, remodel of first floor (possibly Lethaby involved. Publ. in The Architect, 1885. Des 1879-80/1885 morning room add.; mostly destroyed now
- 1879 Shaw's St. Michael of All Angels, Bedford Park. (Saint: 1878-79.) Lethaby involved in this work in 1879; persp. by Lethaby publ. in Building News.
- 1879 R.N. Shaw's Flete House, Devon (c. 1878-1882); drawing attributed to Lethaby: int. elev. of the library (c. Aug 1880; also fireplace and stair det. (drawings at R.I.B.A.; Lethaby on site in 1880) Also: Lethaby's work: 1) doorway dets., 2) fireplace dets., 3) lockcases, 4) organ case (as part of re-doing saloon, 5) possibly the dets. in gallery along western wing. Lethaby's drawings publ. in British Architect (1890) and Country Life (1915).
- 1880 Shaw's "Tabard Inn Stores," Bedford Park (drawings: June 1879-June 1880). Slim involvement.
- 1880 View(s) of store, house and inn in Hounslow (1878-80). Published in Building News, Shaw commissions, with Lethaby doing drawing?

- July 1880 Lethaby admitted to studies at Royal Academy.
- 1880 R.N. Shaw's #196 Queen's Gate (original built 1874-76, some reded. 1880). Lethaby involved in alteration to morning room.
- 1880s Window, Church of St. John the Baptist, Symondsburry, Dorset
- 1881 Won R.I.B.A. Pugin competition (architecture) for a set of architectural designs, mostly Neo-Tudor with lots of ornament. (Lethaby toured Somerset as a result of winning; a sketchbook associated with this exists.)
- 1881 Won £25 prize for best design in upper school at Royal Academy.
- 1881 Drawing at the R.I.B.A.: Front for the School of Art at Bedford Park. For Lethaby to "work up," not a building design by Shaw (but in his office) via Maurice B. Adams; in the Building News.
- 1882 Drawing by Lethaby: "A Medieval Subject" publ. in The Building News, vol. 42, pp. 204, 206, 207. (Lethaby's Royal Academy 25 Premium Design award.)
- 1882 Won R.A. prize for an "Early English Gothic Design"
- 1882 R.N. Shaw's Alliance Assurance Co. (St. James Street, London, blt. 1882-83; persp. signed by Lethaby, view from S.W., as exec.; publ. in The Builder; vol. 42, 26 May, pp. 634, 644-645.)
- 1882 Pen drawing (895mm x 584mm or approx.. 35" x 23") shown first at Royal Academy of Art, then reproduced in Building News (1882)
- 1882 R.N. Shaw's "Dawpool," Cheshire, (published in The Architect in 1884, 1886 and 1888 and Country Life in 1911; also in The Builder). Lethaby's perspective of it also published in Building News, 1882. Lethaby worked extensively on this project. A drawing by Lethaby exhibited at R.A., 1883 or 1884.
- 1882 Competition entry for St. Anne's, Streatham; collab. With M. Macartney and E. Newton (not placed.)
- 1882 Won prize at Royal Academy for an Early Gothic architectural design.
- 1882 Did title vignette for his writing in the Arch. Assoc. Journal, "A Memorial to the Late J.D. Sedding."
- 1883 Founded St. George Art Society.
- 1883 Wrote prospectus for Art Workers Guild.
- c. 1883 R.N. Shaw's All Saints, a mission church in Port Elizabeth, South Africa (unexecuted). Floor plan and persp. of the proposed church by Lethaby.
- 1883-1884 R.N. Shaw's "Greenhill, Allerton Rd.," Allerton Road, Liverpool (Des. 1883-84, dem. c. 1930). Saint: Lethaby worked on it.

- 1883- R.N. Shaw's "Cragside." Lethaby involved with des. of Drawing Room. Saint: Lethaby did
1885 5 chimney pieces, incl. chimney piece in drawing room.
- 1884 15 January 15: Art Worker's Guild founded. Lethaby was a founding member and wrote the prospectus, which was accepted. Other founders: Horsley, Newton, Macartney, Prior.
- 1884 Shaw's Church of All Saints, Leek (Staffordshire); Lethaby involved. It has been said this heralded Lethaby's arrival as a designer of genius. By Lethaby: font and pulpit, east window, reredos. Change in Lethaby's taste evident?, not Shaw's taste? Lethaby probably did: font and pulpit also.
- 1884- Shaw's House for Mrs. Sassoon. Design for one of the villas for the Sassoon family on the
1885 Ashley Park Estate, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey. Possibly by Lethaby. (Demolished.)
- 1885 Greenaway House, Frognal, Hampstead. (Lethaby worked on this Shaw commission.)
- 1885 Blomfield: Lethaby involved in Shaw's #180 Queens Gate, London.
- 1886 Organ casing by Shaw and Lethaby for Shaw's Church of St. John at Low Bentham (rectory of church w/ new chancel). Reb. of rectory—designed: 1884-85. Lethaby probably worked on this also. (See also 1890.)
- 1886 Architectural Illustration Society formed by Lethaby and friends. Society operated from 1886-1902.
- 1886- Shaw's New Scotland Yard (some drawings date as late as Sept. 1886; Lethaby had done
1890 considerable work on it. Des. 1886 ff, constr. 1887-90. (JB-J: Lethaby involved from 1888.
- 1887 Shaw's Holy Trinity Church (Harrow Mission Church). First designed: 1885-86; revised design built 1887-1889, Latimer Road, London (Blomfield: Lethaby involved in it extensively). First of a series of ecclesiastical interiors for which Lethaby was responsible esp. c. 1889. Elev. and sect. drawings published by Muthesius (sect. in 1900). Saint: Lethaby did not have decisive role in planning but "let loose" on the interiors—certainly: reredos; probably organ, font stalls, pulpit, basilica cancellum idca, tracery in window behind altar; see the publ. perspective sketch prob. by Lethaby c. 1885 in Howell's Victorian Churches (1968). Collab. with sculptor Stirling Lee. Also: Muthesius: Lethaby involved with the church, did "stone base."
- 1887- Holy Trinity Church, Bothenhampton near Bridport, Devon by E.S. Prior. Saint (1977):
1889 Lethaby did altarpiece c. 1889, executed by Augustus Mason.
- 1887 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society founded, Lethaby et al.
- 1887- Shaw's #42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead (destroyed). (D. Martin via R.W.S. Weir:
1888 Lethaby worked on exterior; J. Brandon-Jones: Lethaby designed a door.) Also, at the R.I.B.A, a section by Lethaby of possible fireplace drawings for the drawing room, Elevs. commonly attributed to Lethaby. Lethaby involved from 1887. Project publ. in the Architect in 1889/1890. (Saint and Rubens: all 42 drawings are at R.I.B.A. and were done by Lethaby.)

- 1888 Lethaby's drawing of the Beryl Shrine from Rosetti's poem: "Rose Mary" publ. in The Architect, 20 Jan.
- 1888 First Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Show.
- 1888 Shaw's #170 Queen's Gate. Lethaby des. the porch and doors; Saint: Lethaby did Italian shutters and possibly waterheads and drain pipes.
- 1889 Shaw's 185 Queens Gate, London, S.W. des. 1889, exec 1890-91; destroyed 1940 by war bombing. Saint: one of Lethaby's out-of-office projects after he left Shaw in 1889.
- 1889 Did illustration(s?) for J.D. Sedding's book on Saxon and Norman Architecture (unpub.).
- 1889 Showed 11 pieces at 2nd Exhibition of Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (Muthesius said these were shown at the 1st exhibition); incl: a) the altarpiece for the Prior commission at Bothenhampton, Dorset (Holy Trinity Church, 1887-89); b) a marble chimney piece executed by Farmer and Brindley; c) 3 tiles adapted from old designs and exec. by C.H. Bramham; d) a frame for a looking glass (carved, inlaid with mother of pearl); e) design for silversmith work (part of a toiletry set); f) fire dog dec. w/ enamel, g) box (inlaid glass and gilt gesso, exec. by Walker and Boutall, h) a book plate process block.
- 1889 Two of Lethaby's drawings formed part for the frontispiece of the Architectural Association Sketchbook for 1889.
- 1889 Collaboration with Morris firm on the remodeling of Stanmore Hall, Middlesex. Drawings by Lethaby at R.I.B.A: staircase (2); dining room fireplace, large drawing room (drawings for both a large and small fireplace); small drawing room and library details; Room "C": paneling over fireplace; fireplace for room "A" or "C"; another fireplace; cupboard details; carving table.
- 1890 Lethaby left Shaw's office (Lethaby in Shaw's office 12+ years; 1878 to 1889 or 1890.
- c. 1889-1890 During first year on his own Lethaby worked for many people, including Shaw, Sedding, Macartney, Emery Walker. Rubens: Lethaby did everything from illustrations to design for completed building. Lethaby also involved with a number of firms making architectural fittings
- 1890 E. Newton's "Bullerwood," Chislehurst, Kent. view of garden from the east, as exec., by Lethaby, pen drawing (480 x 620mm).
- 1890 Kenton and Co. founded (focusing on A&C furniture), (Lethaby, E. Gimson, S. Barnsley, M. Macartney, R. Blomfield and Col. Harold Malet. Much of the firm's production used in Lethaby's houses.
- 1890 Worked on Shaw's #185 Queens Gate, London. (Although Lethaby not in Shaw's office by then.)
- 1890 The Architect, 28 Nov., 1890, another subject in Arch Illust. Series): drawing or design by Lethaby—subject unknown by this author.

- 1890 At Third Exhibition of Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Lethaby showed a rosewood table and armoire (cabinet with walnut veneer); (view of the armoire publ. in The Architect, 8 Nov., 1890 (Arch. Illus. Soc. #293).
- 1890 Some detail/design work for an E.S. Prior commission (see 1887-1889?)
- 1890 Font and cover for Shaw's Church of St. John the Baptist, Low Bentham, Lancastershire. Illus. of these publ. in Muthesius' Die Neuere Kirchliche baukunst in England (1901).
- 1890 Memorial Window, "The Four Evangelists," for church at Symondsbury, near Bridport, Dorset (obtained on E.S. Prior's recommendation); painting on white glass (not stained glass) similar to grisaille work (c. July, 1890).
- 1891- Avon Tyrell. Correspondence with Lord Manners begun 1890. Collab. with E. Gimson
1892 (plasterwork, 1892), Morris and Co. and Stirling Lee: altar triptych, reredos. Also: tapestry des. by Burne-Jones; Randall Wells was Clerk of Wks. Commission originally offered to Shaw, passed onto Lethaby as a "setting up" commission. Photo in Vol. I of Muthesius Das Englische Haus; 2nd ed.: plan, 3 ext. views, 2 int. views.
- 1891 Stanmore Hall (remodelling), collab. with Morris and Co.; Lethaby did details for more than one fireplace, for a staircase and for some furniture (R.I.B.A. drawings related to this are dated 1890).
- 1891 Illustration: (path through the woods), see 1923 entry.
- 1891 Kenton and Co. exhibition at Artworkers Guild headquarters (Barnard's Inn).
- 1891 Lethaby Joined SPAB (introduced by E. Gimson).
- 1892 Stable and Cottage additions at Avon Tyrell.
- 1892 Took over execution of (i.e., oversaw completion of) Ernest Newton's church St. Swithin's, Hither Green, Greater London, due to latter's illness.
- mid to Lethaby designed furniture for a number of firms: metalwork (mostly cast iron fireplaces
late for Longden and Co), pottery, woodwork for Farmer and Brindley, leadwork for Wenham
1890s and Waters. Also: E. Newton passed on a number of small "craft" commissions to Lethaby also.
- 1892 Kenton and Co. disbanded (Lethaby got his own oak chairs as part of liquidation of stock).
- 1892 First involved (c. July) at London Central School. Was appointed Art Advisor (along with George Frampton) to Tech. Education Board of London County Council.
- 1893 Joined SPAB Committee.
- 1893 Met future wife American Edith Crosby while on travels to Istanbul with Harold Swainson.

- 1893 “The Hurst,” Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield (suburb of Birmingham), incl. entrance lodge, demolished in late 1960s (except lodge); client: Charles Matthews. Plaster work designed and exec. by Gimson. Re: drawing room fireplace: c.i. grate and side panels are two of many designs Lethaby made for Longden and Co. (Int. view publ. in Das Englische Haus 2nd ed. (1908-1911); vol. III (2nd ed.) had ext. photo view. Also pub. in Country Life (date not avail.): “The Lesser country Houses of Today—The Hurst.” (Rubens: this house also incl. in 1st ed., 1904.)
- 1894 Fourth Exhibition of Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Lethaby exhibited a fireplace and a cabinet. (In Studio, Vol. II, No. 7, Oct. Photo publ. of inlaid walnut cabinet exec. by A. Thorn; photo of Lethaby’s fireplace w/ checkboard motif, exec. by Farmer and Brindley w/ grate by Longden & Co.
- 1895 Lethaby designed fireplace(s) and grate(s) for Smith’s and Brewer’s Passmore Edwards Settlement Estate (Mary Ward House), Bloomsbury. (Work here also by Voysey, Troup, Dawber, Newton.)
- 1895 Sixth Exhibition of Arts and Crafts Exhibition Soc. Lethaby exhibited: 1) table with marble top (executed by Farmer and Brindley, illust. in the 1896 Studio); 2) chimneypiece (marble and onyx); fender executed by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson (also involved: Farmer and Brindley); fender made possibly by T. Elsley and Co. (this piece also illustr. In 1896 Studio); 3) two gas pendants; 4) Two enamelled candlesticks; 5) some elect. fittings; 6) Two book plates; 8) photos of architectural work. (Lethaby’s Avon Tyrell and Newton/Lethaby effort at St. Swithin’s.
- 1896 Named co-principal of London Central School of Arts and Crafts, along with George Frampton.
- 1896 City Planning proposal (illustration and text) for improving London (described in text of Lethaby’s “Of Beautiful Cities” as part of collection of essays Art and Life... (1897).
- 1898-1900 Eagle Assurance [Insurance] Co., Colmore Row, Birmingham, Collaboration with Joseph Lancaster Ball (Saint dates this 1899-1900).
- 1898-1902 Melsetter House with chapel and estate buildings, Island of Hoy, Orkneys. Some collab. with E. Gimson and George Jack. Jack did most of furniture. Some of this des. by Lethaby, like inlaid sideboard; some by Augustus Mason. Client: Thomas Middlemore. Some pieces by Morris & Co. and Morris tapestries used.
- 1899-1900 Ryssa Lodge, Island of Hoy, Orkneys. (additions to existing crofter cottage); client: Thomas Middlemore.
- 1899 Orgill Lodge, Island of Hoy, Orkneys (remodeling). Client: Thomas Middlemore. (Brandon-Jones: This was after Melsetter and Ryssa Lodge work.)
- 1899 Design for a block of worker’s flats in Chelsea. (collab. with F.W. Troup and Patrick Geddes)
- 1899 Illustration for friend Emory Walker (in engineering and drafting business).

- 1900 Appointed first Professor of Design at Royal College of Art.
- 1900- "High Coxlease," New Forest, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. Client E.W. Smith. (Service: 1900-
1901 01; Rooke gives the date of this work as 1898.)
- 1901 Lethaby's font and cover of 1890 at Low Bentham, publ. in Muthesius's book on English churches.
- 1900- All Saint's Church, Brockhampton; consecrated 23 Oct., 1902. Altar tapestry designed by
1902 E. Burne-Jones, woven by Morris and Co. Some furniture and lamps designed by Lethaby. Specs dated April, 1901; cornerstone laid: 25 June, 1901. Groundbreaking c. late April 1901.
- 1902 Marriage to Edith Crosby.
- 1902 Entry submitted for Liverpool Cathedral competition (collaborative effort with Henry Wilson, Halsey Ricardo, F.W. Troup, R. Schultz-Weir, Stirling Lee and Christopher Whall); perspective and plan publ. in 1957 RIBA J.
- 1903 Drawing for frontispce of J.D. Sedding's book Garden Craft Old and New, caption of Lethaby's drawing: "A Garden Enclosed" (publ. after Sedding's death).
- 1903 Letchworth Garden City competition entry; collab. with H. Ricardo (invitation to compete given in Oct.).
- 1903 Retired from practice (some said ceased practice in 1902; C. Brown said "about 1901").
- 1904 Lethaby's father died.
- 1906 Lethaby was made Fellow, R.I.B.A.
- 1906 Lethaby appointed Surveyor for Westminster Abbey.
- 1907- L C C Architects Dept. prepared drawings for new quarters in London for Central School
1909 of Arts and Crafts, Southampton Row. (Lethaby prepared specs, acted as consultant on the design. Main designers: A. Halcrow Verstage, helped by Mathew Dawson. (One source said Lethaby laid foundation stone in 1905.)
- 1908 L C C Central School moves into the new building on Southampton Row.
- 1910 Lethaby made a Fellow, Society of Antiquarians.
- 1910 Applied for Slade Professorship at Oxford.
- 1910 Lethaby's Eagle Insurance featured in Country Life, 7 May.
- 1911 Lethaby's "High Coxlease" publ. in Country Life, 11 March.
- 1911 Lethaby resigned as Principal of London Central School of Arts and Crafts.
- 1911 Lethaby became Master of the Art Workers Guild.

- 1912 June 22, Royal Charter granted for British School at Rome. Lethaby's name on roster of first Faculty of Architecture for the school. (Blomfield)
- 1915 Lethaby active in founding Design in Industries Association.
- 1915 Lethaby's All Saints Church publ. in Country Life, vol. 915, 15 May ("Small Country Buildings of Today—Brockhampton Church, Herefordshire.")
- 1915 (Oct.) Designed choir stalls, chancel screen, organ casing (exec. by George Jack), lectern and reredos (exec. by Stirling Lee) for St. Paul's at Four Elms, Kent, (as part of remodeling of the 1880 Gothic Revival Church).
- 1918- Pulpit and font cover for St. Margaret's, Rochester (finished by 1920 or 1921, collaboration
1921 with George Jack.) Intermittent remodeling work.
- 1918 Some illustrations, probably by Lethaby, accompany Lethaby's article, "A National Architecture" esp. part VI: "Walls, Arches and Vaults" (8 Nov., The Builder).
- 1918 Resigned as Professor at Royal College of Art (c. June retirement).
- 1920 Appointed Surveyor for Rochester Cathedral
- 1921 As part of "Modernism of Design," series of articles by Lethaby in The Builder, Lethaby published his perspective drawing done in 1896 (described in his essay of 1896, "Of Beautiful Cities", (publ. in Part X, 7 Oct., fig B). Also:
- a) Part I (7 Jan.): sketch of "Old Devonshire Chimney" possibly by Lethaby
 - b) Part II (4 Feb.): 4 sketches of towers, possibly by Lethaby; sketch of cemetery headstone (by Lethaby); probably did another sketch of a carved stone
 - c) Part IV (6 May): probably did 2 figures (pottery); det. of a German castle
 - d) Part VI (3 June): A number of leaf studies and designs based on leaves—possibly by Lethaby
 - e) Part VIII (5 August): moulding profiles, building det., column capital—all by Lethaby
 - f) Part IX (2 Sept.): illus. of a gate and grave slabs near where he was staying—by Lethaby; probably by Lethaby: wall det. on cottage near Chilmark quarries, corbel det. and det. of an initial on masonry—all probably by Lethaby; text of the article implies following also by Lethaby: 2 chimney dets. in village he was staying in; by Lethaby: elab. cornice det., and det. of one of Dürer's roof designs illustrated from memory, and stable arch detail; probably by Lethaby: arch detail and sketch of small round structure with conical tower
 - g) Part X (7 Oct.): In addition to the Thames to British Museum city planning sketch, these probably by Lethaby: apse details (plans) from Chartres and Rouen cathedrals; Rouen window arch det.; plan of Lichfield Cathedral; Armenian church plans, col. det. and capital detail; partial plan of a library, det (plan) of the cathedral at Ani
 - h) Part XI (4 Nov.): by Lethaby—figs. 1-5: sect. and plan with vaulting diag.; probably by Lethaby: lattice of sticks on a cottage porch; 4 paper designs by Lethaby

- i) Part XII (2 Dec.): by Lethaby: det. of a Wiltshire cart shed; probably by Lethaby: three other illustrations.
- 1922 Offered R.I.B.A. Gold Medal (Jan.). Refused.
- 1923- “The Builders Art—Theory and Discussions” (series of articles in The Builder,
- 1924 accompanied by Lethaby’s graphic work):
 - a) Part II, “Science of Christopher Wren,” (probably Lethaby’s 3 line drawings and ½ sects through domes)
 - b) Part V, “Designing in the Period Styles or Building Realities?” (Lethaby said in the article that he did the following drawings for the article u.n.o.:
 - 1) column cap (late archaic Greece).
 - 2) chair (early Byzantine) (drwg. orig. done over 30 yrs. earlier)
 - 3) column capital (Gothic)
 - 4) garden statues, birds and topiary, in “period-style Jacobean” (also orig. done over 30 yrs. earlier)
 - 5) illustration of a “new design” for part of a Gothic choir arcade, drawn to satirize.
 - c) VII, “Clerks and Artists” (7 July): 4 constr. details (wood), 2 tombstone det., 1 fig in wood (det. cartshed), 1 wool glove
 - d) VIII, “The Two Architecture’s and Education for Building.” Lethaby said he did the following:
 - 1) tomb ornament details (2)
 - 2) cottage tables
 - 3) medieval church details
 - 4) cast-iron step for a wagonette
 - 5) sketch of a plant (at end of the article)
 - e) Part XI, “Direction and Development”: [color] illust. of tree-lined path (orig. done in 1891). Also probably did 13th cent. det., a Greek Doric capital detail and a mantelpiece detail.
- 1924 R.I.B.A. Journal, 6 March: printed reply to Lethaby’s refusal to accept Gold Medal.
- 1926 Lethaby submitted a piece for an Arts and Crafts exhibition but it was rejected.
- 1927 Resigned as Surveyor of Rochester Cathedral.
- 1928 Resigned as Surveyor of Westminster Abbey.
- 1929 In Lethaby’s article “Architecture as Structural Geometry” in The Builder: chevet plan possibly by Lethaby.
- 1931 In Lethaby’s article: “Architecture As Engineering” in The Builder, Part II): plan for approach to tunnel under the Thames possibly drawn by Lethaby.
- 1931 Lethaby died in London, 17 July.

- 1932 "The Wit and Wisdom of W.R. Lethaby," 8 Jan., The Builder used illustrations by Lethaby: a) pencil sketch; b) medieval portal.
- 1932 (15 Jan.) "The Wit of Wisdom" series continued titled "Lethaby and the Moderns," including these illustrations by Lethaby:
- a) Guildford, persp. of a building front (early Renaissance), probably pencil.
 - b) Chenonceaux, Tour des Anglaises, pencil, persp. view.
- 1932 (22 Jan.) "The Wit and Wisdom" series continued, section titled "Lethaby and of the Arts," The Builder included 2 pencil sketches by Lethaby of medieval column capitals.
- 1932 (29 Jan.) "The Wit and Wisdom" series continued, section titled "Lethaby and Life," incl. following graphic work by Lethaby:
- a) perspective drawing in pencil of Tour St. Aubin, Angers.
 - b) work done in Shaw's office: "Cragside," Northumberland; Albert Hall Mansions, S.K.; houses on Chelsea Embankment (3), ink drawings, other designs and dets. for various small objects (done in ink, pencil, and crayon) incl. tables, altar front, cabinet and shelves, marble floor dets., embroidery, leather work, fire place dets., sideboard.
 - c) Lethaby's buildings (ink and pencil drwgs and photos): "The Hurst," Melsetter House, "Avon Tyrell," "High Coxlease," Eagle Assurance, All Saints (Brockhampton)—including, for the "The Hurst," grnd. flr. plan/1st flr.; for Ryssa Lodge: 2 plans and a garden elev.; a garden wall and screen at Tangley Manor, Guildford, 1885 (arch.: P. Webb).
 - d) student project: design for a building (ink), done at the RA Schools.
 - e) drawings (pencil, crayon, monochrome, watercolor) of mosaic stained glass (including at Bourges); dets. of medieval fig. sculpture; Byzantine column capital; font (Norman); portals (Gothic) with tympana (incl. that at Bourges and Vézelay, from 1887); wall arcade detail (from 1888), Romanesque arch/jamb; Norman arcade at Peterbury Cathedral; timber houses of Rouen and Caen; Gothic bell tower.
 - f) nature studies: landscape, tree studies (one from 1920); farmhouse group; cornfield; hillside with sheep; wooded valley.
- 1932 Photo of Lethaby at desk, R.I.B.A.J., vol. 39, no. 8, 20 Feb.
- 1932 Exhibition of Norman Shaw's drawings including those done by Lethaby for "Cragside" (drawing room, fireplace drawing, 1883-85; Albert Hall Mansions (1879-1881) and for three houses on the Chelsea Embankment.
- 1949 "An Orkney Mansion, Threat to Melsetter House," The Times (London), 31 Oct.
- 1950 R.I.B.A. exhibit of work of Lethaby, Webb and Morris included drawing Lethaby did for the Soane medallion (1879) as Shaw's assistant. (Possibly this exhibit was in 1951.)

- 1952 Victoria and Albert Museum Exhibition of Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Art including this work (objects or designs for objects) by Lethaby: sideboard, fireplaces, leadwork, embroidery, painted pottery, and tiles for Wedgwood.
- 1957 Exhibit, Nov 27-Dec 13 at LCC Central School: drawings by Lethaby for his own architectural works and for others (and photos of his works) including: "The Hurst" (ground floor, 1st floor plan), Melsetter House, Ryssa Lodge (2 plans and garden elevation), Orgill Lodge, All Saint's Church (Brockhampton), Liverpool cathedral competition (perspective), Tangley Manor (a Philip Webb commission at Guildford—drawing of a garden wall and screen).

Note 1: Location of misc. drawings by Lethaby (list not inclusive):

- 1) At R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection
 - 1) Perspective sketch of a subterranean necropolis
 - 2) "The Structure of Civilization," n.d.
 - 3) Misc stair details
 - 4) 26 drawings for fireplaces
 - 5) a textile design
 - 6) a tomb design
 - 7) 178 watercolors and misc. drawings in various media
- 2) At Victoria and Albert Museum (excluding those listed in the table) (n.d. available unless indicated):
 - 1) View of Barrington Court (elev.)
 - 2) View of Brympton Church, Somerset
 - 3) Sketch of a ptd. clg. at Blythburgh Church (dets.)
 - 4) Measured drawings of cut work (bench ends), several churches
 - 5) French architecture sketches (mostly medieval subjects, incl: measured drawings of St. Etienne, Nevers, France)
 - 6) Italian sketches at Como, Florence, Padua, Palermo, Rome, Siena, Venice, Assisi
 - 7) English arch. subjects, esp. medieval, but including sketch of a ptd. decoration on a roof by W. Burgess in Waltham Abbey Church; a sketch of a Burne-Jones window, Christ Church, Oxford (dets.); des by Lethaby for a candelabra; numerous other drawings of old architectural subjects (dets).

Note 2: The following notes have not been linked to specific entries in the main table.

- a) Rubens reports that 17 of Lethaby's designs were published in the Building News under the editorship of Maurice Adams. Martin, op. cit., has said that 14 designs were published in this journal from February 23, 1877—April 19, 1878.
- b) Re: Lethaby's work under Shaw—Saint: "In Lethaby's time, the plans are inevitably all Shaw's, critical details are frequently Lethaby's, and the elevations, which remain in doubt, must have resulted from intimate collaboration."
- c) Re: Lethaby and collaborators—Service: Lethaby, Prior, Wilson, Ricardo and Gimson were close. They gave sub-commissions to each other for furnishings and decorations.

- d) Re: Lethaby's watercolors: Some of them are kept at the following places: the Victoria and Albert Museum, the R.I.B.A. drawings collection, the Tate Gallery, the National Gallery, and the Huddersfield Art Gallery.
- e) Additional note on Lethaby's craft activity: he won a prize for silversmithing in London
- f) Range of industrial design attempted: materials: lead, copper, silver, enamel, glass, wood, cast iron, brass, leather, textiles. This included designs for: c.i. fireplaces, grates and fire dogs; also: candlesticks, gas brackets, candelabra, glassware, leatherwork, needlework, wallpaper and furniture.

Note 3: Sketchbooks (Some of Lethaby's sketchbooks which were examined in the process of making this study. 63 sketchbooks—from 1871-1926 over a 52 year period are kept at the R.I.B.A). Examined sketchbooks include:

- 1874 (Sept.) at least through Easter Monday, 1875. (age 17+/-, Ebberly Lawn, Barnstaple) includes col. base dets., misc. Gothic dets.
- 1875 (June): floral details
- 1876 Begun Aug. 1875: medieval sketches from Nottingham, Derby, Liverpool
- 1880 (from May): (age +/-23) based at 20 Calthorpe Place, London.
 - a) Normandy sketches (Aug. 12-Sept. 4, 1880)
 - b) Sketches of artwork by Cosimo Tura, Pollaiuolo, Anthony van Dyke, Dürer, Primaticcio, Massacio, Rogier van der Weyden, Snyders, Corregio, Leonardo, Rubens, Cranach, F. Lippi, Melozzo da Forli, C. Crivelli, Raphael.
 - c) Sketch of P.P. Rubens; chimney pieces
 - d) House in Rouen (France)
- 1881 From two English excursions and one foreign: Liverpool, Hampstead, Guildford, incl. 2-month Pugin Studentship, July 12-Aug 15, Eng. med sketches; 3rd incl: Orleans.
- 1882 From Oct (age 25+) based at 20 Calthorpe St. London), incl sketch of an 1808 house.
- 1883
- 1884 (Dec.)
- 1885 Various arch. sketches arch. dets, furniture (England, Scotland, Wales) mainly medieval.
- 1886 (from June) based at 20 Calthorpe Street, London): furniture and arch. sketches, including interior with staircase and Japanese interior.
- c. 1887
- 1887- several including sculpt. at Notre Dame cathedral, Paris.
- 1888

- 1896 (two books).
- 1898 Miscellaneous sketches (two books)
- 1901 Material on Geneva and Berne, Switz.
- 1902 Much material on Salisbury Cathedral
- c. 1902 Material on Canterbury and Wells
- 1904
- 1908
- c. 1919
- c. 1930

Sketchbooks not examined: 1903 (2), 1904, 1905, 1906 (5), 1907 (2), 1908 (5), 1909, 1912-1913, 1915, 1916

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